

COMMUNITY ACTION

No. 28 Nov-Dec 1976

18p



COMMUNITY ACTION

CONTENTS

- 3 NEWS & VIEWS
- 12 Action Notes: Membership
- 18 Job Creation Programme
- 22 Offices: a local treasure trove?
- 24 Tenancy Agreements
- 27 Cuts: local & national action
- 29 Fighting Rent Increases
- 32 Housing Lobby 3: The Spider's Web
- 37 Letters
- 38 Reports & Things

Editorial Group

Dave Ferris
Philip Pearson
Nick Sharman
Peta Sissons
Dexter Whitfield

Thanks to the following for their help in putting this issue together; Nick Vernede, Tim Challans Jen McClelland, Judy Viscardi, Roger Berwick, Steve Hilditch.

Community Action is an entirely independent non-profit magazine. All those involved are unpaid.

Published by

Community Action
PO Box 665
London SW1X 8DZ
phone 01-235-3465 (evenings only)

Printed by: Graham Andrews, Web Offset Ltd.
39 Underwood Road, Reading.

Throwaway Packages

Unemployment, poor housing, lack of community facilities - for decades these have been facts of life for millions of people, particularly those living in the inner city areas of Britain.

In the last 10 years a whole variety of packages have been introduced by the government, sold as "solutions" to these problems - Community Development Project (CDP), Urban Aid, Job Creation Programme (JCP), Comprehensive Community Project (CCP). All these packages have been dishonest - they never could offer real solutions.

*all of them have been set up in response to politically embarrassing publicity, such as high unemployment figures, or the publicity which surrounded Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech, which preceded the setting up of the Urban Aid scheme.

*all these schemes are seen by the governments - both Labour and Tory - as a way of defusing a potentially explosive situation.

*all of them are only temporary. CDP is ending; Urban Aid is to be substantially reduced; JCP is due to finish in September 1977 - after only 2 years. There are no replacements planned.

*all of them have had too little hard cash, committed half-heartedly.

*none of them were set up to attack the fundamental problems, but to soften the effect politically and postpone tackling the issue directly.

Above all, they remain subject to the consent of the financial and industrial profit-makers that call the tune.

So, with these interests howling for cuts in public expenditure, the government "poverty packages" are being closed down or cut back to the bare minimum needed to save face and curb the anger felt over rising unemployment, failure to provide decent housing and community facilities.

The lack of real long-term socialist policies for meeting these problems underlines the fact that these packages are no more than gimmicks.

Publication date

From this issue onwards, we are re-dating Community Action. In other words, although you will get the magazine at the same time (hopefully during the first week of the month), this issue is called "November-December" instead of "October-November". Issue 29 will appear by the first week of January and will be called "Jan-Feb".

NEWS & VIEWS

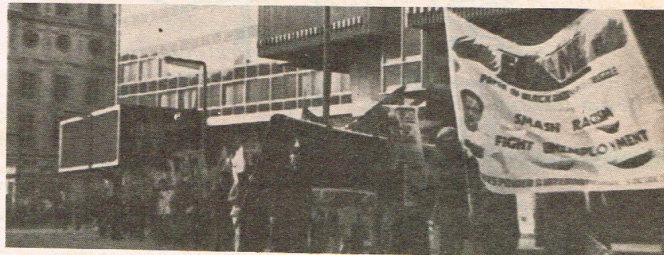
URBAN AID ON ITS LAST LEGS

The next phase of the Urban Aid Programme is very likely to be the last. There is no commitment to continue it beyond Circular 16 which the Home Office claims will be published at the end of November - it's already over 6 months late.

'No Answers'

A Home Office official, when asked about the future of the programme, stated that "to some questions there are no answers". All the evidence shows that no decision has yet been made to definitely continue or close it down, however it is quite clearly sinking fast.

The Urban Aid Programme was set up in 1968 for a 4-year period which was extended to a total of 8 years in June 1970, i.e. up to 1976. Evidence of its apparent doom is also contained in this year's White Paper on Public Expenditure 1979-80 which shows capital expenditure on community services



(listed under Law, Order and Protection Services!) being reduced to only £4.1million in 1977 and to £1m two years later. But this total also includes expenditure by the new Equal Opportunities and Race Relations Commissions!

The amount of money available under Phase 16 will be "considerably less than previous phases," which have been about £4m. The definite amount has not yet been decided. Negotiations are still continuing between staff on the programme and Treasury officials. It is understood that some

Government Departments have been very reluctant to allocate funds to Urban Aid.

The amount of money for recent phases of Urban Aid has got less and less and its real value has plummeted when inflation between 1968 and 1976 is taken into account.

There is to be no significant change in the kind of projects and schemes funded under Phase 16 than in previous phases. However it looks as though the lottery stakes will have doubled since last year!

A few crumbs

Tenants associations and community groups need to have a clear statement about the future of Urban Aid now. The government must not be allowed to let it drift, throwing a few crumbs here and there whenever it is politically expedient.

Previously there have been attempts to organise Urban Aid projects by people in Nottingham and in Manchester. Currently, London projects have got together through the London Neighbourhood Workers Group to press for an increase in Urban Aid. (For more information, contact Dave Clarke, 01-739 9093)

Contact Urban Aid Programme, Horsferry House, Dean Ryle Street, London SW1 (01-211 4101)

The REAL Scroungers

The £100m property company Town and Commercial Properties owes the Inland Revenue over £1m in unpaid taxes. In May the company announced that it was going into liquidation. They had tried to make a deal with the Inland Revenue, offering to pay £400,000 "in a short time" and the rest when they sold off properties. But this was rejected by the Inland Revenue and even a meeting with the First Secretary of the Treasury failed to win them concessions.

Since then the company has announced it was 'saved, then again that it was going into liquidation - and now another attempt is being made to save it (Slater Walker holds 35% of the shares). They have just sold off £29m of properties in Australia but still own 2 new empty office blocks and a 18 storey development in Sydney on which construction was stopped to "await an improvement in the letting market". The company is still trying to do a deal with the Inland Revenue to delay paying the taxes - on money they have already received from selling properties and corporation tax on profitable subsidiary companies.

KIRKLEES

BUS PASSES~ PARENTS FIGHT BACK



The new school year in Kirklees, Yorkshire, brought the cuts home to people here in a big way. The Tory Council which had just taken over from labour, decided to get on with cutting bus passes by increasing the limit from 2 miles to 3 miles, at the same time as the rents went up by £1.50 (approx). The old 2 mile limit was "discretionary"; the 3 mile limit is fixed by law - but as the government stated in 1972 (when Mrs. Thatcher was Secretary of State for Education) nobody thinks it is right for kids to walk 3 miles now. Standards have changed and roads are far more dangerous then in 1944 when the limits were set.

Solidarity

The first campaigns were started by parents in villages near Huddersfield, where the Council had taken off the special buses. For these parents there were 2 issues - special buses and free buses. These groups were firmly controlled by the parent/teachers associations, who were in turn controlled by the school staff.

Working class parents in Batley and Dewsbury formed their own groups, linked together through the ACT Advice Centre. "Batley Angry Parents" as one group called themselves, were the first to call a meeting. About 100 parents were determined to take action,

especially when it was pointed out that it would cost some families up to £10 a week extra at a time of $4\frac{1}{2}\%$ limits on pay increases. There was great solidarity as the better-off parents pointed out that free education, regardless of income was a matter of principle. They would stand by the parents on low wages or on social security - not because they were poor or to be pitied, but because of the principle.

Parents Charter

The next step was for various groups to get together, and they produced a "Parents Charter on School Transport" - this called for

- A return to free passes on the old 2 mile limit
- The return of special buses

Never mind the rain
There's only another 1½
miles to go



HEATING HELP

As a new association we would like to hear from any group who have Johnson & Varley gas/ electric central heating systems (warm air) as we would like to run a survey of our estate.

We have had many complaints of high running costs, inefficient thermostats, non servicing of the units by Gas/ Electric Boards and a general lack of knowledge of how to obtain maximum efficiency from the units.

Please contact Parkside Tenants Association, B. Goldsmith, 170 Trident Drive, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, Beds.

- No discrimination against religious groups sending kids to schools catering for their benefits
- That safety should be taken into account in determining the route
- That a means test system should be rejected
- That the principle of free universal education was at stake
- That parents should be encouraged and supported in keeping the kids off school.

Attendance strike

At the end of August there was a magnificent demo outside the Town Hall. 500 parents and kids shouted their anger at the Councillors. The Labour party tried to make political capital (but without committing themselves to reverse this cut) and got very short shrift. It was the Labour Council last year that tried to compromise with kids' safety in working out the shortest route, and it took a long community action campaign, including the attendance strike, to reverse this decision. The main slogan was "no passes, no school".

It was this question of parents taking their own action that

HEATING SYSTEMS action pack

We have heard from a number of tenants' associations and heating action groups with both information to be included in the Action Pack, and requests that their organisations be included in the list of groups seeking help or information on particular heating systems.

BUT WE NEED TO HEAR FROM MORE GROUPS who are campaigning about the heating system on their estate, or groups opposing the installation of Clorius Meters. We will be producing the Action Pack before Christmas at cost price (we don't know what the price will be until we get all the information in). For details about what will be included, see C/A No. 27, p.17.

SO SEND US ANY INFORMATION YOU THINK WOULD BE USEFUL TO OTHER GROUPS BY NOVEMBER 25 AT THE LATEST.
Or telephone us on 01-235 3465 Evenings and Weekends)

divided the campaign. The very next evening, the village group were manipulated into capitulating by their Parent Teachers Assoc. (PTA) - the headmaster who chaired the meeting had the Education Chairman (i.e. his boss) along to explain the "concession" of putting the buses back on (and the fares to be paid). By clever manipulation and talk of law and order from stooges in the meeting, they decided to send the kids to school (and to "research the problem").

Town hall occupied

However, in the first week of the Batley group's campaign, hundreds of kids were kept off school. An open air meeting held one evening in the rain arranged a demo for the first day of term - so the parents held a march, occupied the Town Hall for 2 hours after brushing police to one side. Then there was a televised march on the nearest schools which was very disruptive.

A week later a mass meeting of 250 parents in Dewsbury Town Hall passed a unanimous resolution to keep on with the attendance strike. By this time, various unions had shown

support: NALGO supported the Parents' Charter, except for point 7 - the attendance strike (NALGO members include the school attendance officers - however it was a close thing at the NALGO executive who nearly supported the strike, and one of the first times a community issue action had been considered by a union here.) Rank and file trade unionists were actively involved in the campaign.

Links established

The parents still haven't got their free passes and the attendance strike has largely fizzled out by now. This shows one of the limitations of community action at this sort of issue - parents are scattered over a wide area, and it is difficult to maintain the solidarity you get in an industrial strike. The attendance strike, although it did have real leverage, was more an extension of protest tactics.

Generally community action lacks the immediate ability to bring production to a halt. The lack of action tactics with a direct leverage was the biggest failing.

However, the campaigns raised

the cuts issues in a real way for the first time - a fact which the middle class PTA groups desperately tried to hide: they disassociated themselves from a cuts leaflet. Furthermore, it seems that the Labour Party will reverse this decision eventually. The growing links between community action groups and the local unions and union activists were also forged in the practical struggle.

Advice Centre for the Town,
104 Commercial Street, Batley,
West Yorkshire.

CARDIFF SUNKEN ROADS SINK COUNCIL

Residents in the Adamsdown area of Cardiff, supported by the Adamsdown Community and Advice Centre, are hoping to win a notable victory over the local authority on the upkeep of the area's streets and pavements. Besides making the streets safer to walk on, the campaign has demonstrated that a local authority cannot escape its statutory obligation to maintain its highways, as set out under Section 44 of the Highways Act 1959.

Mind the ho.....



Blighted area

The County of South Glamorgan has been failing to maintain the roads and pavements of Adamsdown for two main reasons. Firstly, on their own admission, the standard of maintenance is determined by the amount of money made available,

clearly subject to increasing cutbacks in government road maintenance budgets. Secondly, while happy to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on cosmetic improvements in the main city centre shopping street in Cardiff, it is not prepared to spend money on an area without "high usage and/or long life expectancy". Adamsdown has for long been a clearance area, with both houses and streets therefore blighted. Current moves towards rehabilitation have given the area a future once more. But over and above this the Community Centre has established that a local authority has the duty to maintain its highways, even in a clearance area.

Section 44 of the Highways Act 1959 therefore does for roads and pavements what Section 99 of the Public Health Act 1936 can do for housing.

Council at fault

The Community Centre got involved in this issue after several local residents had suffered accidents in the streets. Despite the fact that the Highways Act 1959 establishes that a local authority has the duty to maintain the highways, it has for a long time been virtually impossible to succeed in an action against an authority except where the street or pavement has been particularly dangerous due to a lack of maintenance.

In order to support the claims of individuals against the Corporation, and further, to get an improvement in the general condition of the highways in the area in order to prevent further accidents, the Adamsdown Centre decided to prepare a substantial and detailed report on the streets in the area, showing them to be inadequately maintained. This procedure is laid down in Section 59 of the Highways Act 1959.

Initially, the Centre produced its own report, detailing

defects in several streets and including details of several accidents suffered by local residents. This report had the effect of getting some repairs done by the Corporation. However, it was felt that in order to build up a case for possible use in Court (i.e. to obtain compensation for the injured, and to force the Corporation to carry out more comprehensive inspections and repairs) the help of a professional firm of civil engineers would be necessary.

Legal action

A firm from Kent (without any connections or obligations towards the Corporation) was therefore called in to produce the detailed report, which stated the opinion that the local authority had failed to meet its statutory obligations under Section 44 of the Highway Highways Act 1959. When a barrister's opinion on one individual's claim was obtained, stating that she had a reasonable chance of winning a case against the Corporation, the Corporation's insurance company agreed to pay up.

Widening the issue

From the start, the Community Centre has seen the importance of widening the issue from a number of individual cases, to the interests of residents of the area generally. The Corporation has been requested to carry out a full survey and to produce a programme for remedying defects. The Centre has obtained legal opinion of the likelihood of success if enforcement proceedings are taken.

A Report and Do-It-Yourself Guide to using the Highways Act 1959 has been produced, and is available, price 50p + postage, from Adamsdown Community Centre, 103/4 Clifton Street, Adamsdown, Cardiff, S. Glamorgan (0222-498117/8).

■■■■■■■■■■

Towards financing this work, and in particular the Civil Engineer's Report, the

Community Centre made use of the 'Green Form' part of the Legal Aid Scheme. More on this in the next issue of C/A.

NORTH TYNESIDE



BRENDAN FOSTER
OF REDIFFUSION, GATESHEAD & GREAT BRITAIN

Just two weeks after residents on Wallsend's Battle Hill Estate held a public meeting, attended by 300 people, to protest at what they termed the 'imposition of Rediffusion on Council Estates', Rediffusion Ltd. announced record profits before tax of £16.37million during 1975-6. The Battle Hill residents were objecting particularly to a 10p increase in Rediffusion's charge for TV/radio cable service to their homes and they called on their Ward Councillors to make representations to have the Community Service Agreement with Rediffusion, due to expire in North Tyneside in 1983 (with rental increase based on an index of hourly wage rates, every 3 years), cancelled.

Full story and investigation into Rediffusion in Tyneside Street Press, Sept/Oct 1976 price 5p from 118 Sydney Grove, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4. (see also C.A. No. 27 p4)

LEEDS HUNSLET FIGHTS ON

Since January, Hunslet Grange Heating Action Group has been fighting the high heating costs in our all-electric

flats, and campaigning for full repairs to the serious structural faults in the flats.

Our own survey had shown that the flats were unsafe. We sent it to the Council (see C/A 27, p 18) as part of our campaign.

We are still waiting for the Council to meet us to discuss a repairs programme. They have still failed to accept responsibility for the extra heating bills we have to pay. But we are carrying on our campaign.

We were right

In mid- August the Council finally released their own report on the structural condition of our homes. The report prepared by a structural engineer from the West Yorkshire County Council said the flats were safe - but to be on the side of caution, the use of calor gas and paraffin should be banned.

The report proved HGHAG's campaign to be right on four major points:

● the deteriorating living conditions in the flats were due to structural faults in the building and the inefficient central heating system. They were not the fault of residents, as had been stated in previous council reports!

● there is a danger of the flats collapsing in the event of an explosion.



Hunslet tenant's demonstration at the Social Services office

● there is a danger of fumes and smoke spreading between flats in the event of a fire.

● the dry-pack was crumbling on the structural joints as we had forecast from our examination.

Press conference

While pleased with these points, we found little in the report to convince us of the structural stability of the flats.

We, and the members of the Housing Committee, received the report only two days before the Special Housing Committee Meeting to discuss it. Despite the lack of time, we hurriedly prepared our comments, and circulated them to the committee members and the press. We held a press conference inviting press and councillors, on the morning of the meeting

in a flat which was in particularly bad condition. At the press conference, we challenged the Council to deny that the flat was unsafe and demanded they rehouse the family.

Shambles

The Housing Committee meeting in the afternoon was a shambles. The councillors did not have the background to comment on the technical points in the report. Our comments were ignored as was the challenge to rehouse the family.

The Committee voted to accept the report! So the Committee accepted that the flats were safe, and went on to recommend that the structural engineer should draw up details of repair works for each flat.

Before implementation of a programme of repair works, the

HELP TO SELL COMMUNITY ACTION

Please fill in the form below. We will send you some C/A posters and information sheets describing C/A aims together with a list of contents of back issues. Each issue of C/A will be sent on a sale or return basis. We must however have payment and unsold copies returned on a regular basis.

Please send me

___ 6 copies of C/A
___ 9 copies of C/A
___ 12 copies of C/A
___ specify

Name _____
Address _____

Community Action, P.O. Box 665, London SW1X 8DZ

works themselves, compensation, etc, would have to be approved by the Housing Committee.

They also agreed that the tenancy agreement for Hunslet Grange should be changed to prohibit the use of calor gas and paraffin. The Committee instructed the Directors of Housing and Social Services to meet with the DHSS and the Yorkshire Electricity Board to discuss the implications of the ban on calor gas and paraffin.

It was further agreed to explore the possibility of a meeting between the structural engineer and HGHAG.

It was further agreed:

- to explore the possibility of a meeting between the structural engineer, the HGHAG and their advisers

- to have an exhibition of photographs and diagrams showing the details of the structure

- to consult the residents, by holding exhibitions and meetings, on the repairs programme to be carried out.

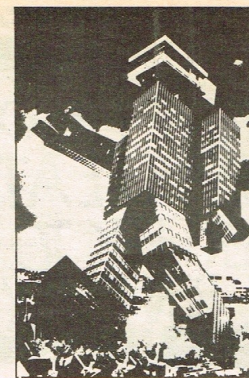
Silence

All these seemed steps in the right direction and we wrote to the Council stressing the need to arrange the suggested meetings as soon as possible. But the weeks dragged on and we heard nothing. Rumours began to spread about the repairs. The next round of electricity cut-offs took place just before the September bills were due.

We finally heard from the Housing Department that repairs programmes had been decided upon and the cost approved by the appointed members of the Housing Committee.

'SHOW' flat

They are however going to open 'before-and-after' show flats for the residents to comment on. Meanwhile the repairs are going ahead on the empty flats. If the flats are safe, the repairs prog-



ramme should improve living conditions somewhat.

Our main fear is that there is no cure for condensation proposed. The Council are gambling that by stopping the draughts, improving ventilation from the drying cupboards, and improving the central heating system, the condensation will disappear. Technically this may be so. But who will pay? Fewer and fewer residents are now able to afford to run their central heating.

Another petition

At the same time as the Heating Action Group was trying to sort out the repairs, a group of women on the estate organised a petition protesting about the high costs of electricity and demanding a subsidy from the Council, especially now that calor gas and paraffin were to be banned. HGHAG supported their action and helped to take the petition around the whole estate.

A meeting was held and it was decided that our efforts should be directed against Social Services because:

- ★ both Yorkshire Electricity Board and the DHSS tell people to go to the Council's Social Services Department with their problems, but when they get there, Social Services could offer nothing.

- ★ Social Services have a legal responsibility for children, that is, to prevent them from being taken

into care because of financial hardship.

We felt both these points should be publicised and Social Services should make clear their policy on helping people who have been cut off.

Sit in

Because of the general nature of these points we contacted other local action groups with an interest in electricity and organised a sit-in with their support in the Director of Social Services offices. He returned from a meeting and talked with the residents for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. He promised a statement within a few days.

When the statement arrived it was with the official change in tenancy agreement banning calor gas and paraffin, and offered little to the residents, except a vague offer of rehousing if they were actually cut off. A potentially divisive tactic on the council's part. Some residents who are cut off are now trying to get rehoused.

Council tries to gag us

We also heard that the Chairman of Housing had rejected the idea of a meeting between the structural engineer and HGHAG and our advisers. Also that the exhibition of photographs and diagrams of the structure was to be at a Tenancy Subcommittee which meant that it would be closed to the press and public!!

We decided to publicise the fact that the Council was refusing to meet with us. We also published our comments on the structural engineers report, which we had withheld in anticipation of meeting with him.

Also, before the sub-committee meeting we briefed the ward councillors, who are Liberals, and the Labour opposition group, on our comments on the report.

Some minor concessions did result from the meeting. The

Chairman agreed:

● To arrange a meeting between the structural engineer and 6 residents of Hunslet Grange, but we were not to be allowed to have any of our advisers along.

● To get hold of and make available all the plans and drawing specifications for the flats.

● Samples of concrete from the flats would be tested to determine their quality.

We have not accepted the limitations on the meeting with the engineer, and are currently negotiating the terms on which this meeting will take place.

The struggle goes on!

Hunslet Grange Heating Action Group, 16 Askern Chase, Leeds 10.

BRISTOL ON THE MOVE ~ AGAIN

The 1968 Caravans Sites Act gave local authorities the obligation to provide gypsy caravan sites with facilities for a minimum of 15 caravans.

Many authorities have failed to provide these sites for a number of reasons but the prejudice against gypsies which is felt by many people is thought by gypsy organisations, like the Romany Guild, to be the root cause.

Outcasts

Because they are always travelling and because they are often forced to camp or squat on private and local authority land, they are treated as outcasts from society. They are often violently evicted from sites, their travelling makes learning difficult for the children, and they feel they are a persecuted group.

Gypsies have to earn a living and in towns this often means work like breaking scrap metal on untidy sites which causes resentment among their neighbours. In the country, the

straggling roadside sites where gypsies are forced to camp upsets local residents. Yet many local authorities are still not providing the facilities they are obliged to. The Romany Guild feel that no other community is treated as cruelly as gypsies.

The following news item from Bristol illustrates an example of a council's attitude towards gypsies.



This caravan is situated on the old Filton by-pass, the only site which Avon County has proposed as an official site for gypsies. But even here gypsy families are being moved on by the Avon County bailiff.

Avon remains the only county in the South West which has failed to meet the legal obligation to provide sites for gypsies. Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset have all provided official sites and there are upwards of 35 pitches in each of these counties.

Smoke Lane closed

In January 1976 the temporary site at Smoke Lane, Avonmouth was closed and the sole remaining family was evicted and forced to join other travelling families already parked in the lay-by opposite. The water supply to the site was cut off and two of the children were injured by the heavy traffic on Smoke Lane. In protest six Irish travelling families

occupied Avon Social Services head office in Bristol, stating that they were not prepared to tolerate such dangerous conditions and that they were effectively homeless. Later that week the Avon County bailiff quietly suggested to the families that they could move to a site owned by Avon County on a disused section of the old Filton By-pass, and they found the gate to

the site unlocked.

Permission refused

Avon County then produced plans to turn the disused roadway into an official site for gypsies, but North-avon District Council bitterly opposed these proposals. They refused to discuss planning permission for the site and prosecuted Avon County for allowing their own land to be used as a caravan site without a licence. Avon County were fined £100. North-avon then invoked a 1963 Court Order obtained by the former Thornbury Rural District Council which banned caravans from the Filton By-pass site, and as a result six gypsies were fined £10 each and Avon County scheduled the eviction for 31 August. The Thornbury magistrates applied the 1963

Court Order despite Avon's (unfulfilled) obligation to provide sites under the 1968 Caravan Sites Act.

Fines

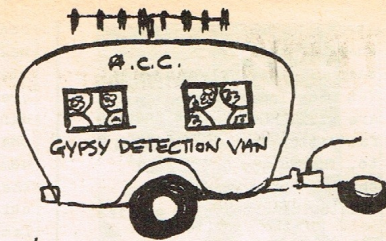
So what will be achieved by this latest eviction? The result no doubt will be much the same as when Avon County evicted gypsy families from Cribbs Causeway last May. The families ended up parked on roadside verges, there was an outcry from local residents in a nearby village, a traveller was subsequently fined £30 for camping illegally on the highway - and within a week the caravans were back on Cribbs Causeway.

Powerless

There is no way in which the gypsies can take court action to compel Avon County to provide sites, as the 1968 Caravan Sites Act specifically states that the default powers lie with the Secretary of State for the Environment. Complaints have been made to the DoE, but on the occasions when they have been formally approached they have stated that they do not consider their intervention to be justified. So the only alternative left was to ask the Parliamentary Commissioner to investigate the Secretary of State's failure to do anything. This was done in December 1975, three evictions and several fines ago, and still the gypsies are waiting.

Still' no rights

There are approximately 100 gypsy families in the Avon area and they have been waiting for an official site ever since the 1968 Caravan Sites Act was passed. Everybody who should have been involved has been involved - the local authorities, the court, the DoE, the Parliamentary Commissioner, the Community Relations Council, the Race Relations Board, the National Council for Civil Liberties, Shelter, the local press ... - and still the gypsies have nothing.



Thanks to Hilary Gilmour, Bristol Shelter Housing Aid Centre. Part of this article has also appeared in 'Bristol Voice'.

LONDON A MURAL FOR BATTERSEA PEOPLE



Design for part of the Battersea Mural

"Mural painting is the highest most logical, purest and most powerful form of painting. It is the least selfish, for it cannot be turned into an object of personal gain or be hidden for the enjoyment of a privileged few. It is for the people, it is for everyone."

Jose Clemente Orozco, Mexican mural painter.

A new art form is developing in this country - the art of mural painting on exterior walls and several groups are established and working, mainly in London.

Thousands pass by

In Battersea, near Battersea Bridge, the Wandsworth Mural Workshop are painting a wall 18ft. high by 256ft. long, and it is probably the largest to be painted in London so far - and the most public, as thousands of people pass each day to cross the Bridge.

This wall overshadows a small park, so there will be unrestricted views from a distance and from a wide range of viewpoints.

The theme of the painting is "Battersea, The Good, The Bad and The Ugly". A local artist is co-ordinating the painting and has taken the advice and suggestions of local people in the designing of the picture. Children from two local council estates help at the weekends by painting in areas drawn during the week by the artist.

Community Industry, a government sponsored employment project for school-leavers,

are to provide a team of 5 youngsters so that painting can continue during the week. It has taken us 4 full weeks to prepare the wall and 6 weekends to paint on about a fifth of the picture in rough.

Council grant

WMW have a £350 grant from the London Borough of Wandsworth and a donation of paint from a paint company. The whole project is being filmed, in colour, by Liberation films with a £3,000 grant from the Arts Council. (WMW approached the Greater London Arts Association for a grant of £570 but they refused to fund the project.)

This mural will be a significant statement from and about the community of Battersea and not merely a brief, unstructured paint-in. The Workshop hopes that it can uphold the tradition of the

best of the murals of the modern movement, begun in 1922 by the Mexicans Sequeiros, Orozco and Rivera, painters committed to portraying the culture of working people and of their exploitation by the ruling class in Mexico until and, sadly, even after the revolution.

Rubbish

The Battersea mural will have a large new broom sweeping away the "rubbish", such as derelict factories empty for years, tower blocks built in the heyday of high rise, office blocks proposed and existing, the heliport, trendy restaurants, gentrified housing and luxury flats, the Battersea Smell, the funfair in Battersea Park and juggernauts and cars. All of this will be swept into a recycling machine to emerge at the other end as schools, hospitals, libraries, etc. The Broom will have swept clean a space for a good public transport system, low rise council housing with gardens, meaningful jobs in co-operatives, allotments, a swimming pool in Battersea Park, cycle ways and pedestrian precincts. All of which will be peopled by portraits of local people, including bus drivers and conductors from the local garage, shopkeepers, and the people helping with the mural.

By making use of the talents of the Battersea community, involving Community Industry and with the artistic skills of the Wandsworth Arts Resource Project, this mural should prove to be artistically and socially effective.

Wandsworth Mural Workshop,
1. Battersea Church Road, London
SW11 (01-223 6761)

We intend to write more about murals in a future issue, and would like to hear from groups who are painting or planning murals in their area.

LEEDS COMMUNITY-BASED RENEWAL

The Rocheford Tenants Association has produced a report on their experience of Community based renewal (see C.A. No.16 p5) The report is about the experience of allocating new houses, in an estate being built next door to a clearance area, to the residents in the clearance area, far in advance of the actual completion of the new houses. It also tells of the experience of the prospective residents in trying to influence various aspects of the design of their estate.

Since the report was written Leeds has announced cuts in its house building programme. Its very likely that there will also be cuts in the clearance programme. The report suggests that the opportunity of local rehousing and pre-allocation is fundamental to the success of a clearance scheme. If scope for local rehousing is to be the prime factor in phasing clearance areas then there must be changes to recognise this so that CPO confirmation and a council's plans for local new building are treated by the Dept. of the Environment as one inseparable process.

Copies of the report "PRE-ALLOCATION AT PEPPER LANE" are available from Mrs Jennings, 5 Rocheford Close, Leeds 10. in exchange for two 6½p stamps.

THE GREAT SALES ROBBERY

SELLING COUNCIL HOUSES MEANS

- * higher rents * increased public spending
- * longer waiting & transfer lists * less choice
- * creating council ghettos * reduced mobility
- * loss of jobs in direct works * greater social division

So states 'THE GREAT SALES ROBBERY': the case against the sale of council houses - the first comprehensive and authoritative analysis, written for tenants and workers, of the effects of selling council houses.

This 20 page illustrated pamphlet is sponsored by 33 tenants federations, Trades Councils, Cuts Campaigns, and local Labour Parties. The pamphlet covers not only the sale of existing council houses but also the sale of land earmarked for council housing to private builders, equity sharing and build-for-sale schemes. The pamphlet explains -

- Why council housing is so important
- Why all sales must be stopped
- Who's demanding the sale of council houses
- Sales campaigns around Britain
- Action by tenants and workers

PRICE

1 copy	6p	- plus	9p post
10 copies	55p (save 5p)	- plus	29p post
25 "	£1.25p (save 25p)	- plus	55p post
50 "	£2.40p (save 60p)	- plus	85p post
100 "	£4.70p (save £1.30)	plus	£1.10 post

FROM

SCAT, 31 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (Tel. 01-253 3627)
(cheques/postal orders payable to SCAT)

MEMBERSHIP

getting people involved

These notes are about recruiting and maintaining membership of a community group. They are written from the shared experience of a number of people involved with different groups. It's not a subject that's been written about or discussed as much as other more pressing or exciting subjects - as for example propaganda techniques. But it is important. Membership problems often seem to arise out of the special circumstances of an area or issue and the specific personalities of the people involved. But there are some common principles and general lessons that can

be learned. The notes that follow are concerned not only with gaining "card-carrying" members, but also with getting people involved with the group's activities in a less formal way.

WHY DO YOU WANT MEMBERS ANYWAY?

The answer to this may seem obvious:

- * the more people involved in the group the more activities it can undertake;

WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?

It's important that the group is as clear as possible about its aims and how they relate to the need for membership, both at the outset and after the group is established. Of course, the aims of the group will change over time as new members bring new needs and ideas to it, and as new information and events raise new issues. So it's crucial to look at the aims of the group from time to time and their implication for membership. Your aims might be some of these:

* TO INVOLVE AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE IN A SPECIFIC AREA in discussions of neighbourhood problems and collective action to meet them. Many Tenants' Associations and Community Associations will aim to do this to make sure that everybody's needs are being considered and nobody's interests are ignored or threatened by the group. Too narrow a membership may cause friction and be divisive. But an all-embracing membership may be impossible. There may be deep divisions in an area - for example between long-time residents and newcomers - that make it difficult to get certain groups of people together. Such divisions won't go away by pretending they're not there, and your group may get nowhere unless it faces them. So if your group is an area-based one, you need to know your area and the people in it.

There will always be some residents who will take no part in the group. Of course you will try to find out why they're not interested and what the group can do to bring them in. But you'll never have 100% membership, and if your group aims to act in the interests of everyone in the area, you need to know who the non-members are and whether they are a distinctive category of people whose needs your group might be forgetting - for example most of the elderly people on the estate.

Your group should be aware of the effects of your actions on non-members, and possible reactions from them.

* TO REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF AN AREA this is an extension of the first aim. Not only may it be important for an area-based group to be representative of all sections of the neighbourhood, but for it to be seen to be so. Many groups have found their demands dismissed because they are said to be an "unrepresentative band of trouble-makers" (usually by people who make highly dubious claims of representativeness for themselves). A group with a broad-based membership cannot be so easily ignored by the politicians. And more militant action such as demonstrations, a rent strike, etc. requires committed and united action by as many people as possible. As well, many councils insist that a Tenants' Association has a formal membership of a majority of the tenants in the area it represents before recognising it for grant purposes or for tenant management participation schemes, and your group may decide that its purposes are best served by meeting the Council's demands. But remember that a large membership on paper doesn't guarantee that an Association is representative of the real needs of an area. A committee or leadership that isn't in constant touch

- * the more it can be aware of the issues that concern and interest people;
- * the more it can be seen as representative;
- * the stronger it is to undertake collective action.

So membership is important. But before undertaking a general recruitment campaign, an existing group - or the steering committee for a new group - would do well to stop and think about a few basic questions. Questions like: Who will be interested in joining the group? and: What are the boundaries of the area in which we want to look for members? and: How formal a membership do we want? The answers to those questions will be determined by the aims of the group - by what the group wants to achieve.

RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

Most groups probably start with a few people who recognise the need for joint action. Usually they will call a meeting at some point, after giving it as much publicity and contacting as many people as possible. The more contact before the meeting



with the membership it claims to represent can soon come to serve the purpose of providing a council with a facade of phoney "participation" rather than to serve the people of the area.

* TO BRING TOGETHER AND REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF A SPECIFIC SECTION OF PEOPLE

The aims of your group may not always be best met by seeking membership from everyone in an area, even where the issue is area-based. For example, in a Housing Action Area the interests of the tenants and those of property-owners may be opposed on certain issues. Tenants may find that their interests are being undermined if they take part in a catch-all Residents' Association. It may be better for tenants to form their own group, and join forces with the property-owners in the area only when their interests coincide. On the other hand owners, tenants and landlords may be able to join forces in their opposition to a Council plan to demolish an area. But they may find they differ over what alternative plan is best for the future of the area.

* TO FIGHT ON A SPECIFIC ISSUE Many groups will start from concern over a single issue - for example a group of parents worried about the lack of safe play-space for kids. Obviously they will look for and attract other people with the same concerns, and the group may derive its strength from the fact of common interests. But if the group is too narrow in its concerns it may find that it is opposed by other interest groups. For example, proposals for a playscheme may be opposed by a pensioners' group who want the same

bit of ground or council money for a quiet park. Both groups are likely to be more effective if they can join forces over the more general question of amenities for the area.

* TO RUN A PROJECT OR SERVICE For example, a youth club, a community newspaper, a welfare rights advice service or a refuge for battered wives. If this is the group's aim, you may only want a limited membership of people who will actively involve themselves. It may distract from the group's main purpose to try to maintain a wider membership. But you should consider that you could save conflict later if you bring in at some stage everybody who's affected, e.g. the people who live round the youth club or playground. Keep in mind that wider support may be politically important when you're trying to get your grant renewed and the council is under pressure to make cuts. And don't forget the need to involve the people you're providing the service for.

* TO CAMPAIGN ON A BROAD ISSUE AFFECTING THE WHOLE BOROUGH, DISTRICT OR COUNTY

In such a case it would be unrealistic to expect a sizeable proportion of the population affected to formally become individual members. In such a case the best strategy might be to seek affiliation from already established groups who are affected by the issue: e.g. tenants' associations, union branches, community groups, trades councils, etc.



the better, and personal contact is best. The way of going about it is fairly straight-forward, and most of the points that need to be thought about have been covered in our action notes on organising public meetings (CA no. 19) and the Propaganda War (CA no. 27).

It's unlikely that you'll get all your potential members along to the first meeting, and you'll need to continue to recruit members. It's important that someone has the job of making sure that the group remains actively concerned with membership, both in recruiting new members and maintaining the involvement of the members you have.

Formal membership

Your group will have to decide early on whether you want a formal membership with cards and subscriptions, or whether to be more informal. Formal membership with cards and subs can give people a sense of belonging and contributing to the group through their subscriptions, which can be a small but important source of funds for a group, particularly in the beginning. And in certain situations - if a group is established as a charity for example - formal membership may be a necessity. However, a formal membership can exclude people who aren't "joiners" but who would get involved with the group on a more casual or occasional basis.

And formal membership means work. Certainly if you do have a system of formal membership with subscriptions you must be prepared from the beginning to keep careful records of who has paid what, and the people handling the money must be clearly accountable to the membership for the use of the funds. Nothing is more likely to cause trouble in a group than badly kept accounts.

Putting your message across

Getting new members will depend on how well you are able to get across the message of what your group stands for and what involvement with the group offers people.

- ★ Public meetings, leaflets, newsletters, canvassing are the tried and trusted means of doing this. Keep membership in mind

when undertaking these activities: for example a membership desk at a public meeting.

- ★ It's important if at all possible to have a clear contact point, preferably someone who is usually available on the telephone or at home.
- ★ Jumble sales, fetes and festivals should be used not only for fundraising and fun, but for letting people know what your group is about and for recruiting new members.
- ★ Think about making your group known through public and visible activities, e.g. street meetings, an info stall in the market, making a video film of the problems of the area.
- ★ Obviously the more publicity your group's achievements get, the more people who are interested will want to get involved with the group.

Not everybody will see how they can benefit through joint action. People will need to be convinced that this is so. They will need to feel that they can bring up in the group the things that concern them. If possible try to find out why people who you feel should be part of the group are

BRAG SEEKS WIDE SUPPORT

Battersea Redevelopment Action Group (BRAG), in opposing the redevelopment of North Battersea for offices and luxury housing, never aimed to attract a wide membership to itself, but instead sought to act as a focus and mouthpiece for local feelings about the real needs of the area. After calling an initial public meeting which forcefully demanded that the council should turn down the developer's planning application, BRAG decided to use the resources of their fairly small group to fight the developers through a Public Inquiry. Their "mandate" from the local community for doing this was obtained in several ways -

- ➔ They went to existing community organisations, the trades council etc. to ask them to affiliate to BRAG and to support through resolutions etc. the general principle that the private redevelopment scheme should be opposed.
- ➔ They asked those who supported BRAG's campaign but who were unable or unwilling to appear at the Inquiry, to sign a statement saying that BRAG was appearing on their behalf to put the case against the scheme.
- ➔ they ran an information stall in the main shopping street every Saturday during the Inquiry which kept people informed about developments at the Inquiry and invited supporters to sign a petition.

Thus, without BRAG itself becoming a large membership organisation, BRAG's campaign was given wide support and a number of existing organisations representing the community became involved in the struggle.



staying away. You may find that the aims of the group are misunderstood, or that there are issues that are important to people that your group has ignored.

Exclusive reputation

You may also find out that the group has a reputation that you don't know about. Outsiders may believe that the group is made up of only one category of people - that it's just for the "young marrieds" or for whites only or for "church people". If possible you should try to be aware of how outsiders see the group, and make efforts to counteract any image that misrepresents it.

But too often a group will unwittingly exclude newcomers. Members of an established group often forget how difficult it was for them when they first walked into a room full of strangers, all of whom seemed to be old friends. Unless somebody makes a conscious effort to welcome newcomers and include them in the group's activities, they will come to one meeting or social and not be seen again.

KEEPING YOUR MEMBERS

But recruiting members is only half the job. The other is keeping the members you've got. More than a few groups have started with a large initial membership that quickly melts away. The way to make sure that that doesn't happen is to keep in touch.

This should begin with the first meeting. If you take names and addresses at the meeting, you can follow up on people to talk over the activities of the group and find out what people expect from it. You may find that some people did not understand why they should be interested in the group, or were put off by something you weren't aware of, or had ideas or concerns that they didn't get a chance to air at the meeting.

Groups have organised themselves in many different ways to make sure that the membership is kept in touch with what is being done in their name.

*The most common method is of course regular meetings. But not everybody feels comfortable at meetings, and a lot of people feel they are a waste of time, although they're willing to share ideas and get involved in other ways. And a lot of people simply can't make it - shiftworkers, lone parents, older people who have difficulty in getting about, and so on.

STATING YOUR AIMS CLEARLY

The way in which the group's aims are expressed publicly has very important implications for its membership. One group in East London - the Great Eastern Road Tenants' Association (see CA no 26 p.6) were opposing the re-routing of a major trunk road through the middle of their estate. There were families with children living on the estate who had been trying to get transfers because the traffic was already too dangerous for the kids. They could have seen the trunk road proposal as their only chance for rehousing, and thus given the council a chance of splitting the membership of the tenants association on this issue.

However, the tenants association committee produced a report and press release and held a public meeting in which two aims were very clearly stated, and on which the association's support was sought: firstly that the tenants wholeheartedly opposed the road scheme because it would have meant breaking up the community, and secondly that the association would give active support to any tenants who wanted to be rehoused, because the existing traffic conditions were too dangerous. By stating and acting on these aims, the association was able to fight the road issue without its membership being divided against itself.

... A large membership on paper doesn't guarantee that the group is really representative of the area

- * Many groups produce regular newsletters or community papers. But remember that communication through them is mostly one-way.
- * The most satisfactory way is through personal contact. Some groups have set up systems of street committees or block/street reps to encourage such contact. Others keep in touch through regular weekly or monthly collection of membership subs - but the collectors should make sure they leave time for the chat which can be as important as the money.

The way your group keeps in touch with all its members depends on your specific situation - the aims of the group, how large the area is, how spread out the membership, what other contacts they have with each other, and so on.

Ways of keeping in touch

Whatever way your group adopts, you should remember the need for keeping in touch when deciding how to organise the workings of the group. Perhaps the more common story of the failure of a group is the one where a group elects a small formal committee. The committee works extremely hard in the interests of the group, but fails to keep the wider membership informed and involved. The members feel that they aren't being consulted, that the committee is making all the decisions, and lose interest. The committee feel over-worked, unappreciated and finally give up, disillusioned with the "apathy" of the members. Remember the story before deciding that your group should place a lot of decision-making power in the hands of a small committee. Of course many groups work very effectively in this way - but only if the committee is in constant touch with the wider membership.

Involve your members

Certainly the more tasks that can be shared, not only the more work gets done, but the more people feel involved in the group. Many people become part of a group because it offers the chance of doing satisfying unpaid work. It's not uncommon however for groups to advertise for "volunteers" - say to give advice on rights or to help with a playscheme - without being clear what work they are wanted for. If people aren't sure what they are supposed to do, or the work they're given to do isn't what they were led to expect, or they aren't shown that the work they are doing is appreciated, they will begin to feel frustrated and your potentially most active members will drift away.

Keep things alive

People will also drift away if they feel that the group isn't doing anything, that nothing's happening. This can happen if people aren't kept informed, and again this points up the need to keep in touch. But it can also happen if the campaign the group is involved in is necessarily long and drawn out, and there are long delays, say in waiting for the results of a public inquiry. A common tactic of authority is to delay decisions in the hope that the morale of a group will be undermined. In such a case the group should look at what other activities it can undertake to keep people involved.

UMBRELLA GROUP IN GIA

In one improvement area there were deep divisions amongst the residents. The older long-time residents complained about newer residents with children. There were divisions between black and white families. Those living in a small council estate were cut off from other people in the area. In such a situation it was unrealistic to expect everyone to join together to tell the Council how they wanted the area improved. Instead, encouraged by a community worker, people formed smaller groups around the specific issues that concerned them. Thus the residents of the estate formed their own association, while local parents came together round the issue of safe play-space. It soon became clear to everyone that they would be stronger if they could join forces in putting their needs to the Council, and an Umbrella Group, with representatives from the different groups, was formed to do this.

Members will fall away, mostly for good reason. People will move away, have family crises, get involved in other things. Sometimes, though, people will drift away because of some misunderstanding, or because they're not happy with something about the group but are afraid to "cause unpleasantness" by bringing it up within the group. It's likely in such a case that they're not the only ones who feel that way, so again follow-up is important to see if a misunderstanding can be cleared up, or whether there's some issue that needs to be thrashed out within the group.

Tell us your experience

These are some of the lessons we feel we've learned about membership. But we'd like to hear what you've learned from your experience. How has your group attracted new members? How have you organised yourselves to keep in touch with all your members and keep everyone involved? Have you comments to make on what we've written? Let us know.

LIE OF THE LAND

COMMUNITY LAND ACT: LAND NATIONALISATION BETRAYED

This is the first and only pamphlet about the Community Land Act written for community groups and the labour movement. It has been written by the Land Campaign Working Party, a group involved with tenant and action groups who have been bitterly disappointed to find that the Act will not provide a solution to their desperate needs for homes, open space, schools and other community facilities and have come to realise that the Act is irrelevant to working class areas.

WHAT THE PAMPHLET IS ABOUT

The pamphlet is a major contribution to the debate on land nationalisation. It contains a clear and well-argued case why public ownership of land is the only way to achieve public control over what is built. The pamphlet includes:

- * a simple guide to the Community Land Act and the Development Land Tax Act;
- * an analysis of their shortcomings;
- * a section showing the effect of the Act on the property market;
- * examples from Cardiff, Newcastle, Battersea, Southwark and Sussex showing why the Act will fail to lift the threat of property speculation from working class communities; and
- * proposals for action by those active in the community action and labour movements who are in favour of full land nationalisation.

COUNCILS AS ESTATE AGENTS

In pointing out the need for the labour movement to stick to its intention to "slay the lion" of land monopoly, the pamphlet shows why private builders and developers will still control the decisions over what is built on land. It argues that although local authorities will own a little more land they will remain in a weak bargaining position with developers in trying to secure community benefits. This is principally because the local authorities will be without the resources to develop themselves and the Act forces them to work as estate agents providing land for private developers.

PRICE:

35p for a single copy
£1.45 for 5 copies
£2.75 for 10 copies

Prices include postage. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to "Land Campaign Working Party."

FROM: LAND CAMPAIGN WORKING PARTY
c/o 31 Clerkenwell Close
London EC 1
Tel. 01-253 3627



JOB CREATION PROGRAMME

On September 24th 1975 the Government announced that it was making a £30 million grant to the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) so that the Commission could launch a "Job Creation Programme" to help reduce unemployment. At that time there were over 1 million people out of work, causing the Government acute embarrassment (it's now 1½ million). So, within the Job Creation Programme (JCP), the Government directed that top priority should be given to young people out of work, and that JCP should be linked wherever possible to further training opportunities. Preference should be given to work projects which would "benefit the community" and contribute to Urban Renewal, like clearing derelict land.

The amount available to JCP was increased to £70 million in February, and again to £84½ million in September. But unemployment has gone up almost every month since JCP was created. Fewer than 46,000 jobs have been started since JCP began. The JCP is a gimmick, meant to conceal the Government's failure to take radical steps to deal with unemployment and create permanent employment.

In this investigation into JCP:

- * we describe what JCP involves and how it is administered;
- * we outline the political weaknesses of JCP, and why it has been attacked by many trade unions and community groups;
- * we show how groups and co-ops recognising JCP's limitations, have turned it to their advantage and set up a number of local employment schemes. We give an example of how it is being used in one city, Liverpool.

A basic fact about JCP is its temporary nature. JCP is due to come to an end in September 1977. What happens when the money runs out? JCP may

be extended for a further limited period. But it can never be a solution to unemployment. This is its major weakness, and one which groups should be very aware of.

What is JCP?

The main aim of JCP is to provide "short-term jobs of social value" to people out of work. A second aim of JCP was to secure "community benefits" through the work undertaken.

The Manpower Services Commission set up 10 area teams, one in Wales, one for Scotland and one in each English Region, including London. There is a Central Unit, also in London, to administer JCP. Their address is Selkirk House, 166 High Holborn, London WC1, tel. 01-240 1760, and they can give the area office addresses.

Who is JCP for?

In any JCP scheme, special emphasis must be given to two age groups: the under 24s and over-50s. Any JCP project must therefore provide especially for semi-skilled and unskilled men and women school-leavers who have never worked or who have had few jobs, and aged 50 and over who are out of work.

Who can apply?

Projects must be managed and run by a "sponsor". By this JCP mean a person or organisation who can demonstrate that they can supervise the project, pay wages, etc. So JCP is for "any group able to organise and manage a project and take on the responsibilities of employer for the people recruited to work in the project." Sponsors include:

- * local authorities
- * community groups
- * private firms
- * trade unions
- * nationalised industries
- * individuals.

How much is paid?

MSC pays a grant to a sponsor covering

- * wages and national insurance
- * administration costs, travel costs, etc.
- * up to the equivalent of 10% of total wages can be paid to cover costs of materials, etc.

JCP will pay the Union rate for a job. Where no clear Union rate can be found, then the maximum wage for a person over 50 on JCP is about £56 p.w. School leavers are paid less, e.g. the standard JCP rate for an 18-year-old is £36.80.

What kind of jobs?

The kind of schemes approved by JCP began as "cosmetic" schemes run by local authorities, e.g. beach-cleaning, with no job training or "future" at all. For this they were severely criticised. JCP has now funded a wider range of projects - construction work, co-operative workshops, carpentry, house repairs, tree planting, environmental work, social services, fibre glass boat building.

Projects are expected to employ a mixture of skilled and semi-skilled workers, with as many semi-skilled as possible.

All projects must provide training on the job.



Abuses of JCP

JCP has been open to abuse. For example Liverpool District Council set up a scheme that involved youngsters walking a prescribed beat at set intervals noting registration numbers and types of vehicles parked throughout the working day. Another had people painting metal fencing around 28 Liverpool parks and cemeteries, and yet an-

other scheme had people engraving the name of the local authority on such valuable items as TV sets and sewing machines in colleges and schools, assuming that this would make them less likely to be stolen! Many projects have effectively used "cheap" labour (cheap because no overtime or bonuses can be paid) to do jobs that perhaps should have come out of the rates. Many projects have also ignored the training and further education requirements.

CRITICISMS OF JCP

When JCP was set up, the Government was in a panic about the unemployment rate, particularly among the young. This resulted in the scheme being set up too quickly, with not enough thought being given to all the possibilities or problems.

* The Area offices were staffed by people without the relevant experience. The Area Committees were set up too hastily, with insufficient knowledge of their areas and the real problems.

* Because bonuses and overtime are not paid by JCP, the wage differences between the young unskilled and the older skilled workers has not always been very much. This has created a variety of difficulties, particularly with the unions who claim that basic rates are not enough for the skilled people who have to teach unskilled people as well as practice their own skill.

* In this situation, community groups especially lost out. Local Authorities with their already established management and administration were able to move much more quickly, and because they were on the same wavelength as the JCP officials, had few problems in getting their ideas accepted. It is taking those community groups who are interested a long time to find their way round the rules and regulations and get accepted as seriously wanting to set up employment projects. This situation allowed many bad Local Authority schemes to get through, and also put off many community groups from applying.

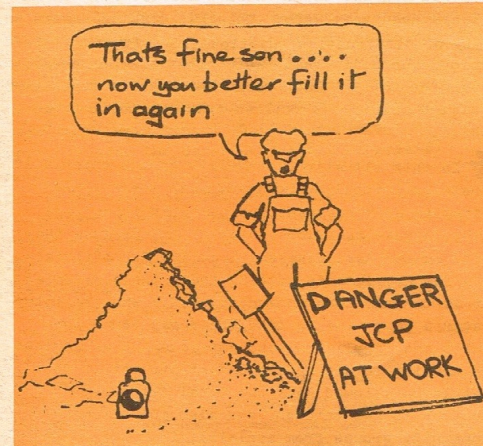
* The Training Services Agency (the training arm of the MSC) has been unable to cope with the demand made of it. It has had no extra funds and again little experience of the sorts of schemes that were being set up and the sort of training needed. This has meant that any training has had to be arranged by the projects themselves, with little outside help. Therefore only those groups most committed to the idea have bothered. This appears to have been a minority.

One condition that JCP insists on before making a grant is that "projects must be new and unlikely to have been set up without JCP money." This prevents councils from cutting jobs, and then using JCP money to do the work. But it also makes it very difficult for any community groups relying at present on largely voluntary unpaid workers to show that a project they are proposing is "new" and "unlikely to have been set up without JCP."

* Youngsters leave school with virtually no idea of what to expect and very often with hardly any confidence in themselves or their own abilities. This has meant added problems to new schemes, and meant that not everyone has been able to cope with the many pressures that exist.

* For all the publicity surrounding JCP, it is actually very cheap for the Government. Workers employed on the scheme pay income tax, whilst the Government would have had to pay their unemployment benefits if they had remained unemployed. One estimate puts the average real cost at £11 per worker per week.

* Some trade unions are opposed to JCP, stating that it is a sop to the unemployed and should be boycotted. Trade unions in one or two areas have refused to sit on the Area Teams. They also argue that some JCP schemes like painting and decorating could actually add to unemployment by doing work on the cheap and taking work away from other trade unionists.



Exploiting JCP

JCP money is unlike other money available to community groups (Urban Aid etc) as it doesn't need local authority approval or council finance, it is independent money. Sponsors are accountable directly to JCP Area Teams. It is therefore very much up to community groups if they wish to make use of the scheme or not. For some, no doubt, the objections are strong enough to prevent them from having anything to do with it. They have decided that JCP is not going to solve unemployment, and it should be ignored. Others have decided not to disregard it but to use it, with all its limitations.

A number of projects have been set up using JCP money in an imaginative way, on community transport, setting up co-ops, etc. Here we describe some examples from Liverpool. In Merseyside a variety of different schemes have been funded: an urban farm, a project with battered wives, waste recycling, food co-op etc.

Large firms and industries have provided additional funds to support projects, and Pilkingtons have provided support for an aromatic garden for the blind. One local council - Halton - has successfully set up a joint working group with local industry and trade unions, not only to plan JCP schemes but to consider the future when and if the schemes have to finish. The Rathbone Project has sponsored two JCPs. One is a furniture-producing workshop and the other an environmental improvement scheme turning derelict sites into landscaped garden areas.

Furniture workshop

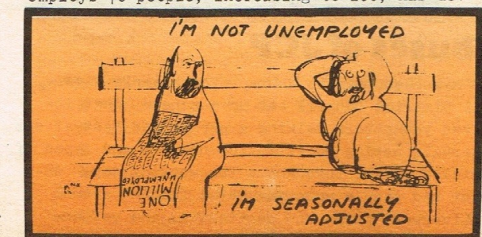
The workshop employs 20 people including 6 craftsmen making furniture, toys and playgroup equipment for the local community. It operates as a training project with the emphasis on learning skills rather than production. The youngsters learn the use of hand tools, crafts like turning, and design of new items. The workshop is able to produce well-made items in good wood (pine and rosewood) for a price that people in Liverpool 8 can afford. Although it can cover its own running costs, it will need JCP cash for wages for the foreseeable future. Without this support the workshop would continue, but with a much reduced staff and far less emphasis on training. At present all the youngsters attend college each week.

Life - Chance

The first voluntary scheme on Merseyside to receive funding was Life-Chance Construction. This is probably the biggest scheme in the region. Life-Chance in October 1975, presented three combined schemes to JCP:

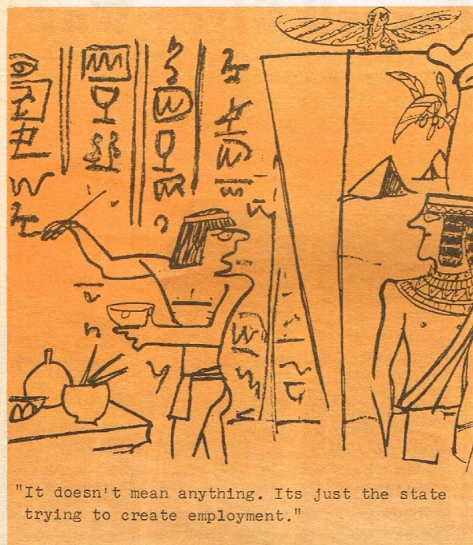
- 1 Drivers and support for Liverpool Community Transport;
 - 2 Renovating a large building; and
 - 3 starting to make things in the building.
- The building was largely derelict, and involved the teaching of many skills to renovate it: roofing, electrical, plumbing, joinery, etc. Activities in the building included fibre-glass boat building, mechanics, joinery, turning of secondhand vehicles into caravanettes, etc. The scheme employed 70 people, skilled and unskilled, male and female.

In May this year a group of the skilled people decided to form the Merseyside Training Co-operative No. 1, and successfully applied for £250,000 JCP cash. This started in August, employs 70 people, increasing to 100, has dev-



eloped the activities mentioned above, employs redundant apprentices to continue their apprenticeships, sends more than half of its work force to college, etc. Trades people can increase their skills, and youngsters can gain apprenticeships. There is a strong emphasis on training and co-operative work.

At the moment the co-operative is possibly too large, and it is hoped that each activity will form a smaller, more viable co-op. Like the Rathbone workshop, JCP money is necessary for a few years to come to ensure that the project continues. Without JCP the project would still exist, but on a much smaller level. This and the Rathbone scheme both attract skilled people who couldn't work elsewhere. They are committed to the co-operative ideal, but it all takes time. JCP expects too much too soon. It is anxious to get visible results to soften opposition. Yet co-operative employment situations are so foreign to most people's thinking that much time must be spent in getting people used to working in the situation, let alone developing it.



CONCLUSION

There are severe criticisms of JCP which any group contemplating applying to the Manpower Services Commission should take extremely seriously. The key practical weakness is that JCP is temporary. It is due to end in September 1977. Most projects will be unable to carry on beyond that date. So what happens to the workers - will they be sent back to the dole queue? And what happens to the service provided by the community schemes?

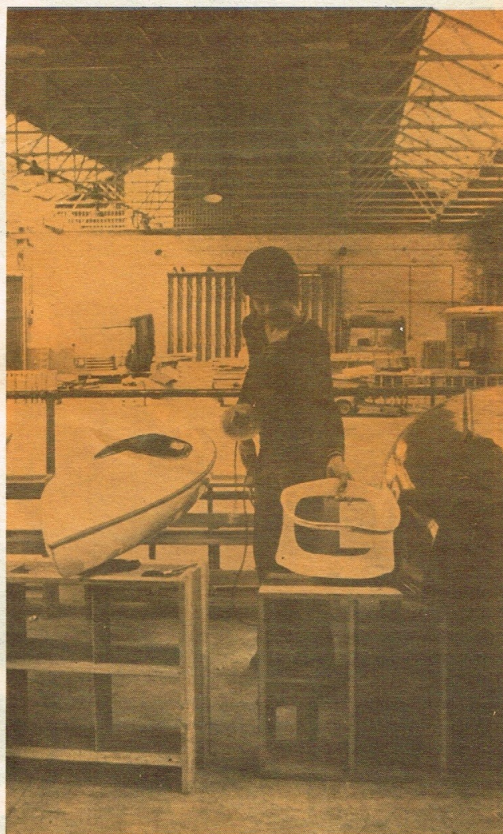
JCP is also attacked as a source of cheap labour and as posing a threat to the jobs of people at work. Any worker involved in JCP should clearly join a union. Greatest care should be taken to

avoid taking on work which is liable to make other trade unionists redundant.

Clearly, some schemes are providing worthwhile jobs with training, and the projects, especially some of the co-ops, may be able to exist in their own right by next September when JCP is cut off.

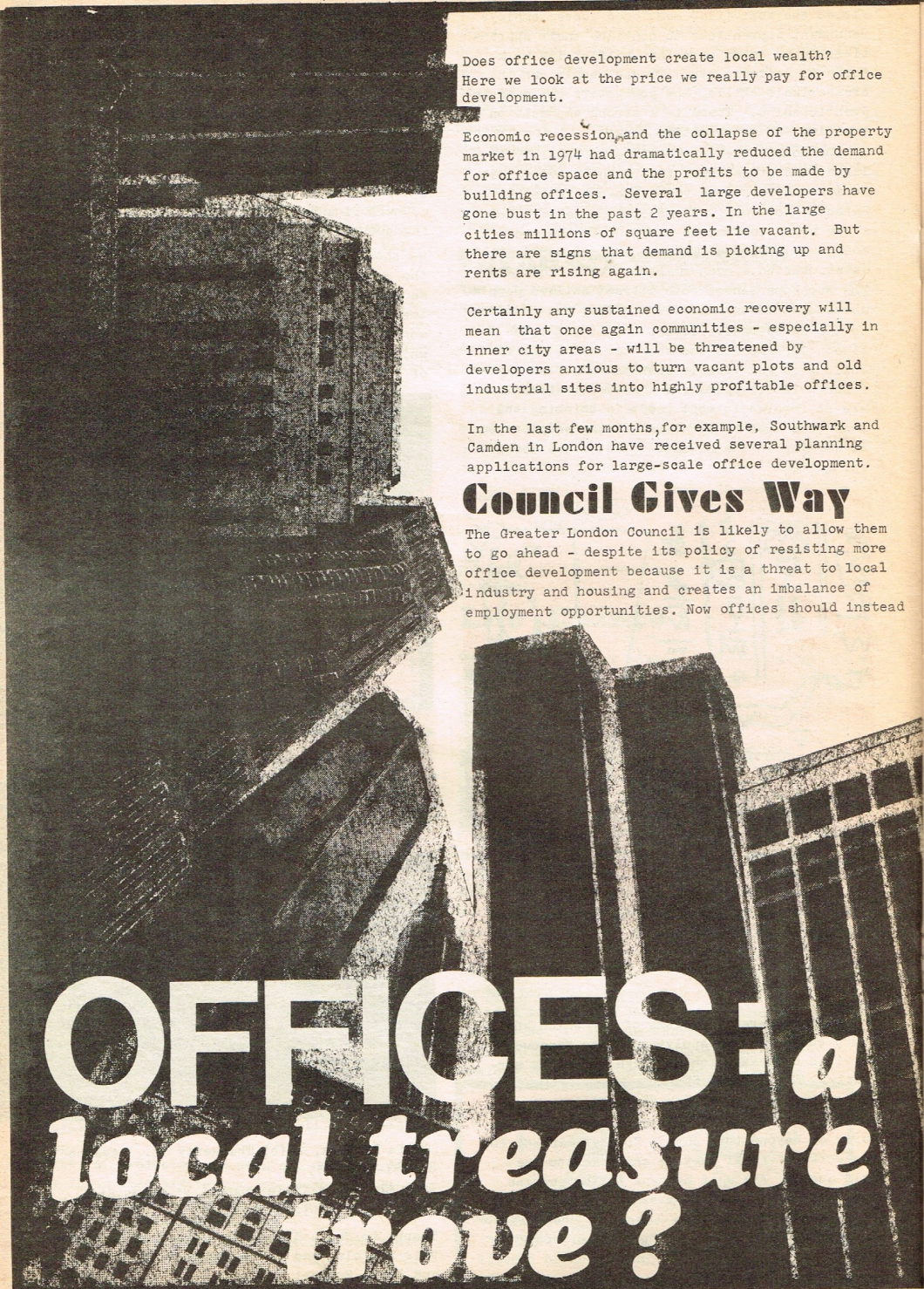
Indeed, all local authorities should follow the example of Wandsworth Council, which is working out policies to help develop worker co-ops with council finance. Wandsworth is also still holding out against making cuts in public spending.

We should not be fooled by JCP into accepting the cuts and being grateful for a few crumbs. We should not lose sight of the fact that behind the so-called "unique opportunity" which JCP money is offering lies a bankrupt Government which has failed to tackle the underlying causes of the worst unemployment since the '30s.



Chris Elphick, 27(b) Thackeray St., Liverpool 8; 051-708 8035;
Andy Churchill, Life-Chance, 45 Leeds St., Liverpool 3; 051-236-3105.

Thanks to Chris Elphick for writing the bulk of this article, and to Maggie Pinhorn, Irene Dillon and Robin Hughes.



Does office development create local wealth?
Here we look at the price we really pay for office development.

Economic recession, and the collapse of the property market in 1974 had dramatically reduced the demand for office space and the profits to be made by building offices. Several large developers have gone bust in the past 2 years. In the large cities millions of square feet lie vacant. But there are signs that demand is picking up and rents are rising again.

Certainly any sustained economic recovery will mean that once again communities - especially in inner city areas - will be threatened by developers anxious to turn vacant plots and old industrial sites into highly profitable offices.

In the last few months, for example, Southwark and Camden in London have received several planning applications for large-scale office development.

Council Gives Way

The Greater London Council is likely to allow them to go ahead - despite its policy of resisting more office development because it is a threat to local industry and housing and creates an imbalance of employment opportunities. Now offices should instead

OFFICES: a local treasure trove?

be dispersed throughout London. That was when there was little new development on the horizon. Now, at the first test of the policy, the GLC is likely to give way.

The key argument used by Councils and developers to confront opponents and bring reluctant councillors into line is that office building creates local wealth by increasing the area's rateable value. Especially at a time of public spending cuts, any addition to rate income is an almost irresistible weapon. But the argument is largely incorrect. A new office block is, in fact, likely to cost a Council more than it produces in rate revenue. And that's before the harmful effects of office building on local communities (reduced housing land, job prospects, higher local rents etc.) are counted.

Counting The Cost

It's worth looking closely at why those offices don't usually help to provide extra local services. The reasons are basically to do with the way Councils are financed.

Councils get most of their money from the Government. Nationally the proportion is over two thirds, in London just over half. Although the rest is raised locally only a part of it actually comes from rates. Local Authority charges (e.g. fares) and Council house rents contribute around a tenth of Council income. Rates in fact make up only about a quarter of a Council's income. So any additional rates from new office schemes at best can make only a small addition to the total budget. Where Councils have low rateable values and receive a central government grant to compensate, the extra rateable value that comes from new building in an area can actually reduce the amount of Government grant - a kind of poverty trap that affects many areas outside London.

Even in areas like London where rateable values are already high (and Government grants correspondingly lower) extra rate income doesn't help much. This is because the payments have to be made to other authorities e.g. GLC, water authorities, ILEA. Typically 70p in every pound of rate revenue goes in these payments (called precepts) to other authorities. This amount rises automatically if the Council's rateable value rises.

In general then there is little relationship between extra rateable value provided by more offices and better local services.

But more than this, it's clear that another office actually adds very little to a Council's rate income.

A Monstrous Myth

This is because rate income from offices is usually overshadowed by other ratepayers -

especially industry and ordinary householders. Nationally, offices contribute only 9% of rates (householders contribute 50%, industry 13%). In the country's major cities only London (25% of rates), Manchester (12%) and Bristol (11%) offices contribute more than this national average.

So offices are far from being a local treasure trove - a monster block of 350,000 sq.ft for example may add about £1m to an inner London Borough's rateable value, an extra 2%. Even an extra £1m in rates won't help local residents much. As we pointed out, other authorities would take £2740,000 in precepts and most of the rest goes to pay debt charges (see C.A. No.18)

Only about £100,000 of the original £1m would be left to help local services.

More important are the much smaller offices - their impact is tiny. For an inner London office of say, 6,000 sq. ft. yields only £12,000 in extra rateable value - elsewhere, much less. A block of flats would yield much the same return.

A rule of thumb method of seeing how much rateable value an office will yield is to multiply the rent by 5/9. So a 100,000 sq. ft. office with a rent of £5 per sq. ft. yields £500,000 rent per year and hence an extra £280,000 r.v. If the rate is 70p in the £ this gives the Council about another £200,000 gross per year; the net figure, as we've seen, can be as little as a tenth of this, i.e. as low as £20,000.

Extra Costs

Offices then give only marginal benefits to local areas. But even these gains can be quickly wiped out by the extra costs offices impose.

The direct costs range from the extra roads, lighting and landscaping to the complex land deals and planning needs which can occupy Council staff for years. Extra refuse collection for example can cost a Council around £20 a day for a large block. Indirect costs include extra services for office staff (who are rarely residents). But more insidiously the land values in the neighbourhood generally are pushed up which puts up local rents and helps to drive people and local firms out of the area.

Office building cannot be justified then by the rates argument. It makes more economic, as well as social sense, to allow developments that residents actually need. Industry and houses provide substantial financial returns to the Borough - and local people can benefit directly.

Arguments that offices are money spinners in fact disguise a failure of political will to ensure development reflects needs rather than profits.

Tenancy Agreements

During the last few weeks you may have read reports in the papers that Peter Shore and Reg Ffeson have promised a "Tenants' Charter" giving council tenants "new rights." Many see this as an exercise intended to soften the blow of the massive rent rises expected to follow the new legislation on housing finance (see page 33)

Council tenants groups around the country, however, have been demanding better tenancy conditions for a long time. They know that it's no good waiting for the government and councils to hand out tenants' rights on a silver plate. If things are to be changed, tenants have to act now.

A recent report which can be used by tenants in campaigning for a new tenancy agreement is the National Consumer Council's document "Tenancy Agreements - A Discussion Paper." The report is the result of the N.C.C.'s survey into existing tenancy agreements and the findings and conclusions reached are not surprising: for example, that the majority of agreements are one-sided, discriminatory, petty-minded and difficult to understand. The report contains many examples of councils' paternalistic attitudes towards tenants.

'Model agreement'

We have already pointed out the many faults of the usual sort of council tenancy agreements which tenants have been forced to accept (CA no. 26), particularly the fact that many so-called "agreements" are simply lists of do's and don'ts for the tenants, without any statement of the council's obligations as a landlord. The NCC report contains a "model tenancy agreement" which can provide a very useful starting point for all groups pushing for a new agreement. Already tenants' groups in Islington, Westminster and Liverpool are using the "model agreement" as a guide in discussions amongst tenants about the sort of new agreement they should negotiate with the council.

The NCC's "model agreement" sets out - without legal jargon and in clear, easy-to-understand language - the responsibilities of both council and tenant, along with the remedies available to each should the other break the agreement. The main features are the provision of security of tenure (protection from eviction) and the repairing clauses. The agreement is not perfect, and tenants' associations will obviously want to amend the "model agreement" to suit local circumstances by excluding some of the points and strengthening others. Below we describe some of the main points and possible controversies in the agreement. Incidentally, there is no reason why housing association tenants shouldn't also negotiate for a new tenancy agreement along these lines.

Security of tenure..

At present, of course, council tenants (and tenants of registered housing associations) have no legal protection against eviction, but the NCC agreement states that the tenant can only be evicted in certain restricted circumstances. Before any decision to evict is made, the council must take certain steps designed to safeguard the tenant. For example, the council must first consider a full report on the situation from both the housing and social services departments, and they must tell the tenant when and where his or her case is to be discussed and give the tenant the right to be there and address the committee.

In the case of tenants threatened with eviction for rent arrears, tenants associations may decide that still more safeguards need to be built into the agreement.

.. or not yet?

However, because the Rent Acts do not give council tenants the same security of tenure as most private tenants, it remains to be seen whether the security given in the agreement would hold up in court against a council who decided to ev-

let a tenant on grounds not covered in the agreement. The need to campaign for full security under the Rent Acts is therefore not removed by a new tenancy agreement.

Repairs

The obligations of the council to carry out repairs are fully and clearly set down, repeating the provisions of sections 32 & 33 of the Housing Act 1961. But besides this, the model agreement also spells out what the tenant can do if the council fails to meet its obligations after getting notice of the defect. This covers withholding rent to cover the cost of repair by the tenant, and those remedies available through the courts, e.g. Section 99 Public Health Act 1936.

Rehousing rights

We believe that tenants' associations should look carefully at the NCC agreement to see if they feel it goes far enough in protecting the tenant on this point. For example, it says that the council can evict a tenant if her or his home is needed for redevelopment or rehabilitation and the council has, in its opinion, offered the tenant "suitable alternative accommodation". Tenants could argue that the agreement should give the tenant a far larger say in whether the alternative accommodation is suitable, and should include a provision that the tenant be rehoused within the same area if he or she wishes to be.



Freedom for tenants?

The model agreement says that the tenant is not allowed to:

- * let anyone other than members of her or his household occupy the premises;
- * make additions to the premises such as new

When can councils evict?

The agreement says that a notice to quit can only be served for these reasons:

- * Rent arrears: where notice of the arrears has been given and no offer to pay has been made.
- * Other serious breach: e.g. persistent nuisance and annoyance to other tenants which continues after a warning.
- * Divorce or separation: where the council want to give the tenancy to the partner who has custody of the children.
- * Technical reasons: if for a technicality it is necessary to end the tenancy, e.g. new or varied conditions to be introduced, though this must be fully explained.
- * Redevelopment or rehabilitation: where the premises are required for this purpose and the council considers it has made a suitable offer of alternative accommodation.
- * Non-occupation: the tenant no longer lives on the premises.

fireplaces, immersion heaters, sinks, wiring, etc.;

- * decorate the outside of the premises; without getting the council's written permission.

Although these detailed points could be interpreted flexibly by the council in conjunction with the tenants association, they do raise a more general question about the freedom of tenants to regard their council house or flat as a permanent home to which they can make adaptations which don't interfere with other tenants. If tenants see the council selling off identical council houses on the estate and the new owners suddenly gaining complete freedom to make even major alterations, they will be forced to feel that freedom from unnecessarily petty rules can only be won by becoming an owner-occupier! This is not so. Greater freedom and control over the home and the estate can and must be achieved within council housing.

Tenants associations' role

Finally, the model agreement contains a few concluding paragraphs saying that tenants' associations should be able to negotiate with the council on a range of detailed matters affecting the estate. No mention whatsoever is made of the tenants' rights to be involved in more fundamental issues such as rent levels, allocation of council housing, repairs budgets, and so on. These are the important issues around which tenants' organisations throughout the whole district or borough should organise to gain more local control. Without action on

these issues, detailed negotiations over the tenancy agreement will take place in a political vacuum.

* * *

"Tenancy Agreements - A Discussion Paper" is available, price 35p, from the National Consumer Council, 18 Queen Anne's Gate, London S.W.1.

Peterborough Don't fence us in!

The Welland Residents Association of Peterborough have sent us the following comments on their new tenancy conditions:

"It is made up entirely of a list of what tenants must and must not do. There is no other document issued to tenants setting out in any way the Council's obligation to the tenant. These conditions are issued on a bright orange rent card and are printed in pale blue ink. The print is too small for anyone to read and is over-stamped with a black note in large print referring to the conditions - making it almost impossible to read the conditions even with use of a magnifying glass.

Nasty conditions

The new agreement contains a number of new clauses, in particular those stating that the tenant will be responsible for replacing, amongst other things, doors, draining boards and tiles for fireplaces and walls, providing dustbins, and for replacing fences within ten years of erection. Some of our fences were installed by the council using untreated wood for the posts, which meant they collapsed.

One particularly nasty condition is the one that says: "The Council reserve the right to take steps to end under-occupancy of houses with 3 or more bedrooms where this is considered necessary, and when necessary to do so will make adequate arrangements for transfer." This permits the council to turn you out into smaller accommodation if part of the family leaves the home. You mustn't have any illusions about putting your grandchildren up for the weekend in future!"

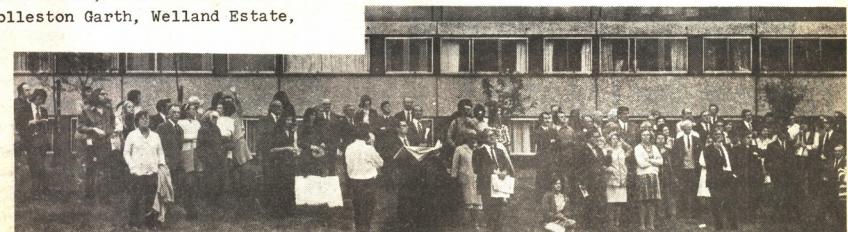
Robbie Britton, Chairwoman, Welland Residents Association, 3 Rolleston Garth, Welland Estate, Peterborough.

Haringey Council misleads tenants

Council tenants in the London Borough of Haringey recently received a letter from the council containing a formal notice to quit and new tenancy conditions, together with the statement that "although tenants didn't have to leave their house or garage(!)", when the notice to quit expired, a new tenancy based on the new conditions - nothing as advanced as an agreement - would automatically come into operation. The "conditions of tenancy" is in fact a fresh list of do's and don'ts, although it includes undertakings from the council about repairs (to be carried out "at the earliest practicable date"), decoration by the council (approximately every 5 years), and transfers (but in accordance with council policy). There is no mention of the council's responsibility under the Housing Acts - instead a totally misleading statement that the tenant will be financially responsible for replacement of baths, sinks, w.c. pans "except where deemed otherwise by the Council", and for clearing blockages to soil pipes. No mention of the council's responsibility under sections 32 and 33 of the Housing Act 1961 which says that the council as landlord is responsible for the repair and maintenance of just these things!

Consultation

Tenants were informed by the council that the new tenancy conditions had been drawn up "in consultation with the Haringey Council and Tenants Joint Consultative Committee". Tenants who had never heard of this committee made enquiries about it, and discovered that it is only open to tenants associations with more than 100 members thus excluding all tenants living in municipalised housing scattered throughout the area, council tenants within Housing Action Areas where it is very unlikely that there would be as many as 100 council tenants, and small estates with fewer than 100 homes! They also discovered that only tenants associations who were eligible for the Joint Consultative Committee were eligible to send representatives to the four area management panels which deal with more specific and detailed council housing issues in the Borough.



CUTS National and local action



ALL OUT ON NOV. 17th!

Thirteen trade unions, representing over 3 million workers mainly in the public sector, are now jointly organising the November 17th national protest against cuts in public spending.

This is the first time since the saga of Heath's Industrial Relations Act that such public trade union opposition has been organised against Government policy. Over 40,000 are expected on the march from Hyde Park to lobby Parliament.

The union's Steering Group has the Labour Party's National Executive's support in its bid to restore plans for £6 billion public spending, cut since April 1975. Only in this way, the unions argue, can the TUC call for an alternative socialist economic strategy be implemented - and unemployment reduced.

£6 billion cut

Reg Race (NUPE's secretarial support for the organising committee) points out that all workers are involved. Healey's July cuts in public spending for example will increase unemployment by at least 60,000. Only 6,000 of these jobs are in the public services. The other (90%) jobs will be lost in the

private sector since most of the cuts are in capital programmes (house building, schools, community centres etc.).

Nonetheless it is the "frontline" public service unions which have taken the lead in fighting the cuts. A recent NALGO survey of its local branches showed nearly 50,000 local government posts have been unfilled. This shows how much services have already been reduced. NALGO's estimate is that 70,000 more will be lost in the next 2 years. The main groups affected will be teachers (26,000 jobs) and fire, police and road safety patrols (16,000 jobs less).

Big step forward

Key unions however have not supported the campaign. Large sections of Transport and General, General and Municipal and UCATT membership are directly affected by cuts in public spending. Yet these unions have taken no action despite the public service union argument that the campaign is simply holding the Government to the 'social contract'.

The joint campaign is a big step forward and there seems every chance that it will continue in some form beyond November 17th. Joint committees at a





local level are also developing - NUPE, NALGO and COHSE have all backed local action committees. The strength of trade union opposition however is still varied. The NUT for example has instructed members not to strike on Nov. 17th but only to send 10 delegates from each of its 564 local associations. Nor is the union committed to continuing joint action.

Yet it is clear that only joint action at local and national level by both the trade unions and the consumers of public services can make any impact on Government policy.

The first step is support for the Nov. 17th demonstration for it is not just a trade union defence of jobs but a chance to show unified opposition to the present economic strategy. This has clearly only worked by increasing unemployment and cutting services to working people.

Newcastle

Well over 2000 workers and tenants marched through Newcastle on October 16 to attend a rally against the cuts in the City Hall. There were delegations from NUPE, NALGO, APEX, COSHE, TGWU, ASTMS, GMWU, the North Regional TUC and trades councils. There were also members of AUEW (TASS) and AUEW from Parsons, Reyrolle and Clarke Chapmans concerned at possible cuts in the power supply industry and the threatened closure of their works. The march and rally were initiated by NUPE.

The Tyneside Action Committee Against the Cuts (TACAC) have made wide use of socialist theatre groups like Roadgang, 7:84 theatre company ("Out of Our Heads") and Mad Bongo ("Axe Me Another") by organising socials linked to demonstrations and conferences - either on the same day on in building up support for them. As well as the regular monthly bulletin 'Fighting Cuts', TACAC have also come up with new ideas - an illustrated pamphlet called 'The Cuts Show Savings Book - Government Stamps on Housing, Schools, Health, etc'

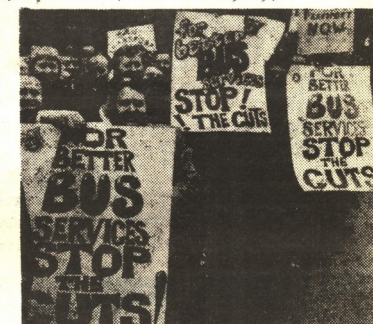
For more information, contact Joint Convenors, TACAC, c/o 85 Adelaide Tce, Newcastle on Tyne 4 (Tel: 0632-31210)

Aberdeen

Following the conferences on the cuts earlier this year organised by the Trades Council, the Aberdeen Campaign Against the Cuts (ACAC) has brought together the trade union movement and groups organised in the community, e.g. Tillydrone Citizens Rights Office, Torry Action Group, Aberdeen Women's Group. The Trades Council's Public Expenditure Sub-Committee is also currently considering expanding its role in the campaign against the cuts.

Over 4000 copies of the ACAC Cuts Bulletin have been distributed to union branches, community groups, workers and claimants at Social Security offices and to shoppers.

A local demonstration is being organised in support of the November 17 lobby of Parliament. ACAC, Box 68, c/o Aberdeen Peoples Press, 167 King Street, Aberdeen (Tel: 0224-29669)



London Conference

AGAINST CUTS IN PUBLIC SPENDING

Saturday, November 13th at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

10am - 5pm

Supported by London Co-op Political Committee
Fire Brigades Union
Fare Fight
National Assoc. of Tenants & Residents
and various union branches and local Labour Parties.

FIGHTING RENT INCREASES



**FREEZE PRICES FREEZE
NO MORE CUTS AT OUR EX**

Over the past 10 years, rents have risen faster than wages, household income (after tax) and retail prices (see C/A 25, p.22). And now at a time of severe wage restraint and cuts in repairs, maintenance and improvement of estates, rents are still soaring. As we explained in C/A 25, p.21, it is already Government policy to increase all Council rents by an average of £2.50 a week (at 1976 prices) between 1976 and 1978. Taking inflation into account, the actual increases are likely to be well over £3.00.

More on the way

In addition to these increases, the Green Paper on housing policy (see p33) to be published at Christmas is widely expected to call for yet more large rent increases.

Rents in many areas have already gone up by between 40p and £1.50 a week - and often these are the second increases within a year. For example, rents in Hackney have just gone up by 70p (the second increase in a year) and heating charges have soared by 35%. The maximum increase has been put on bedsits and 1-bedroom dwellings which has hit the elderly particularly hard. Hackney United Tenants Federation organised a demonstration and deputation against the increases, but of 64 Labour councillors, only 2 voted against the increases - and they have

been threatened with having the whip withdrawn by the Labour Group.

Below are reports on rent struggles in Peterborough, and North Tyneside.

Peterborough

We began our campaign in September this year. The Tories took control in the May elections and promised a "fair rents" policy. Alert to that, we warned them in our annual report in June that we'd react sharply to any moves to squeeze more money out of tenants. They have just announced rent increases of up to £1.50 a week. They have made no secret that the increases are made to reduce the contribution from the rates to the Housing Revenue Account by £443,000, i.e. tenants should be the ones to pay to keep rates on owner occupied property down.

Pay more for less

We called a public meeting and invited the leader of the Council to come and answer questions. He apologised saying he'd try to send the Housing Services Committee Chairman. No-one came. Neither did the official from the Council's Finance Dept. we invited.

This suited us and our 120 tenants who were good enough to come. We explained the situation about the cuts in maintenance repairs - only £34 is

allocated to each house this year for maintenance. The Council will only do emergency and structural repairs - the tenants are now responsible for other repairs and maintenance. The Council has even turned off every other street lamp on the estate.

We also explained to the meeting about how nearly two thirds of tenants' rent goes to pay interest to the financiers, and the profits of the banks and facts about the cuts in public spending.

8 hours of cuts

On 29th September we marched on the Town Hall meeting of full council and barracked the councillors for 15 minutes till the Mayor entered. We then sat through eight hours- yes EIGHT - of Tory cuts till they started discussing the rents. The Labour Councillors seemed to find our presence very amusing - they having done nothing locally to oppose this iniquitous 50% increase during 4½% wage restraint.

We feel a little success. The Labour Groups have at last announced they will campaign against the increases. The Tory Groups have admitted they are considering "an alternative system".

We reckon we have brought this about by exposing the two groups for what they are - disinterested, stupid or just anti-tenant. They nearly all own a house. So do the officers who brought in a policy to keep down their rates at our expense. There are 10,700 Council rented homes in this city - over a quarter of the total housing stock

We hope tenants associations everywhere will do their homework on rents and find out about schemes in the pipeline before they become agreed policy. We always have a representative listening at Housing Services Committee meetings to get wind of changes. Also we are pressing for a proper Tenancy Agreement. We have opposed - and always will - notices to quit which the council is churning out on tenants. They never give fair consideration

When the rents go up remember that on average 62p of every £1 of your rent goes to financiers to pay interest charges



A letter went into the local newspaper - which gives us good coverage - that Friday in which we demanded that the Chairman of the Council admit he duped all at that meeting by insisting nothing like 50% would be put on rents/rates. Tory Chairman Laxton has still not replied to that challenge.

Unite to resist increases

We are going to tour the city on the rents issue to try to get other estates to form tenants associations. Unless they strengthen their own bargaining position we will get little respite.

We are planning to march again when the next full Council meets to ratify the amount of rent to fix.

to tenants! dilemmas. Housing Welfare Services are a pseudonym for Notice to Quit Deliveries. We hope tenants associations not only oppose evictions, but help the family as well in straightening out their budget tangles. For example, we find a lot who should be getting rent rebates and/or supplementary benefits.

We are fighting rent increases because we are not getting value for money SO WHY THE HELL SHOULD WE PAY ONE MORE BRASS FARTHING?

We call on tenants everywhere to unite to resist rent increases and to demand a proper Tenancy Agreement.

● Robbie Britton, Chairman, Welland Residents Association, 3 Rolleston Garth, Welland Estate, Peterborough, tel. 0733- 53640.

North Tyneside

On October 4th, all council rents went up 62p a week.

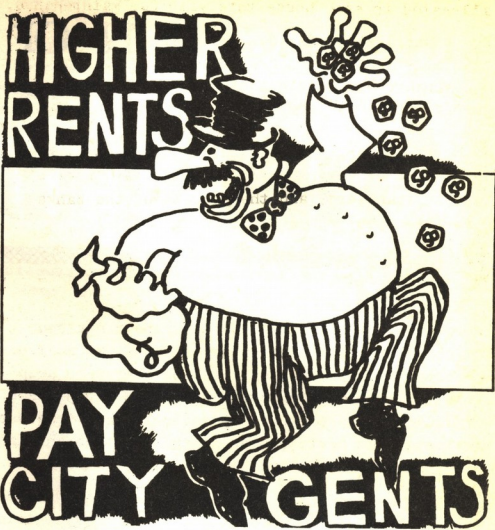
The North Tyneside Housing Campaign has been taking action on a number of specific issues over the past year. (See C/A 23, p.20) In response to the proposed rent increases they organised leafletting of estates and a demonstration at the full council meeting in September when the rent increase was to be agreed. About 80 tenants crowded into the council chamber and a prepared statement was read out before the meeting started.

Leafletting of estates

This led to a great commotion and the police were called to evict the tenants. A large impromptu meeting was held outside the town hall. Meanwhile the council unanimously agreed the rent increase. When the councillors came out of the meeting they were confronted by the tenants. One Councillor, Rickleton, stated "I voted for Labour Party policy!"

The following week the Housing Campaign went round a number of estates with a rock band, loudhailers, and leaflets. Next came a public meeting with over 100 tenants at which a NUPE regional official and a local Labour councillor spoke on the Housing Campaign platform for the first time.

The Campaign did not actually envisage stopping the increase, but considered anyway that it was vital to show that there are a large number of tenants opposing the increase and to continue to keep the presence of the Housing Campaign felt.



A one-day occupation of a rent office was very successful. The leader of the Council was summoned and agreed that no action would be taken against the occupiers. The occupation received wide press coverage.

The Housing Campaign is now working towards forming an all-embracing cuts committee linking the labour movement with tenants groups and to be concerned with all the public spending cuts.

North Tyneside Housing Campaign, 14 Alma Place, North Shields, Tyne and Wear.

**TO ALL TENANTS ASSOC. & FEDERATIONS,
COMMUNITY PROJECTS, CUTS CAMPAIGNS,
TRADE UNION ORGANISATIONS:**

★ WE ARE SELLING THE **Fight the Attack on Council Housing** PACKAGES IN BULK ORDERS OF 6 OR 12

Its vital that tenants and workers understand and take action on the real issues which affect council housing.

★ Each package consists of copies of C/A Nos. 24, 25 & 26 (50 pages full of information on rents, who makes money out of council housing, tenants rights, community facilities, tenants campaigns, the housing lobby, tenant control, the housing market and much more) plus 2 "Facts and Fantasy" posters, one C/A poster "Fight the Attack on Council Housing", costs 55p inc. post.

★ BUT WITH BULK ORDERS: 6 Packages cost £2.90 inc postage SAVE 40p !
12 Packages cost ££.25 inc postage SAVE £1.35 !

INVESTIGATION OF THE HOUSING LOBBY

Part 3

'THE SPIDER'S WEB'

OHMS

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS the Government has spun around itself a complex web of housing "advisory groups", liaison committees and boards to help develop its housing policies. These committees cover every aspect of housing policy, from council housing and rent rebates to construction and land for housing.

This web of committees has considerable influence over housing policy, especially when new legislation, like a new Housing Act, is being drawn up and the Government wants outside advice from so-called "experts", from the construction firms and from building societies.

There are at least 25 committees and advisory groups dealing with housing issues (see box). It has not been possible to cover all of them, so here we take a closer look at 4 typical committees to show:

- * who sits on them
- * what policies they are working on
- * how they respond to outside pressures

SPIDERS

At the centre of this web of committees sits the Secretary of State (Peter Shore), the Minister for Housing (Reg Freeson) and their special political advisors and senior civil servants at the Department of the Environment. Some committees are set up directly by this small group, e.g. the Housing Finance Review. Many, however, are set up after joint consultation between the Government and private industry. Committees of this kind ensure that private interests, from the building societies and the contractors to the estate agents and surveyors, have major opportunities to put their views across to the Government in face to face contact around a table at regular meetings.

Membership

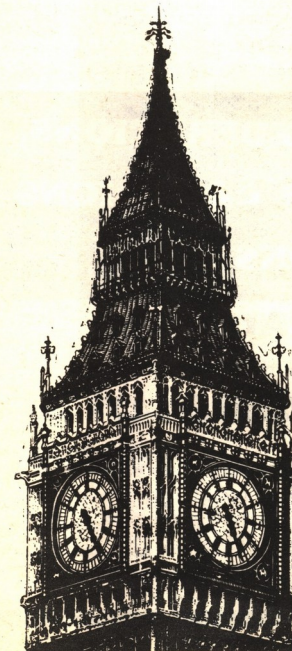
The committee membership is usually drawn from the following organisations:

- * the construction industry, from individual firms like Bovis Homes to the organisation like the National Federation of Building Trade Employers (see Part 1 of the Housing Lobby).
- * the Building Societies (see Part 1).
- * the "Professionals", like the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (see Part 2).
- * the so-called "great and the good" in public life, including academics.
- * the Unions.
- * local councillors.
- * senior council officers.

No Opposition

OUR EVIDENCE SO FAR suggests most committees have substantial representation from the private sector. Some committees are dominated by private interests from private industry. And it appears that the unions do not offer an effective counterweight to these right wing interests. The committees have several points in common:

- * The policies they produce frequently reflect the private enterprise interests of the members like more home ownership, selling council houses, "equity sharing" (see later), higher rents.
- * They usually sit in private, do not publish minutes, and only occasionally public reports.
- * They may meet outsiders, but usually this means others from private industry or the professions.





★ The Department of the Environment services these committees, from arranging dates of meetings to preparing reports and papers "for comments".

2 Types of Committee

Although every committee has its own area of work, and they are not equally powerful, they fall into 2 main groups:

* Standing Liaison Committees.
These are permanent, meet regularly, have representatives from the construction industry, the building societies, the Unions - and discuss policies and day-to-day problems - e.g. the Construction Industry Liaison Group. (See also Community Action No. 27 when we looked at another of these liaison groups - the National Economic Development Council for the Construction Industry.)

* Advisory Groups.
These groups are often set up for a specific purpose - e.g. the Housing Finance Review (see later). The Government selects some members and often invites outside organisations to nominate others. They prepare reports on particular policies for the Government.

In Close-up

Here we look more closely at:-
 * The Housing Finance Review
 * The Advisory Group on Social Ownership
 * The Advisory Group on New Forms of Housing Tenure
 * A Select Committee of MPs on the Environment
 We have chosen the Select Committee of MPs because it shows the pitfalls involved when community groups try to make representations to the Government on housing policy. The Housing Finance Review is involved in a major overall review of housing policy. And the two advisory groups are covering key areas of policy for community activists.

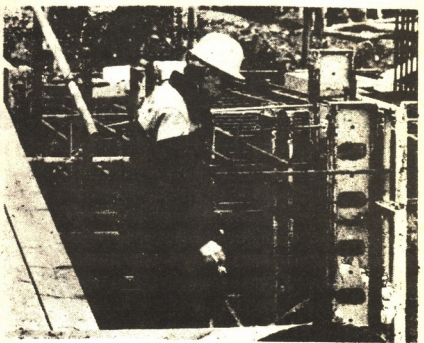
HOUSING FINANCE REVIEW

HOUSING FINANCE REVIEW ADVISORY GROUP
 PROBABLY THE BEST KNOWN of all the Advisory Groups, the Housing Finance Review was launched by Crosland when he was Secretary of State for the Environment. Crosland wanted to be remembered as the man who sorted out the housing finance mess, and favoured radical organisational change. He is also widely quoted as wanting to remove the worst extremes of the tax relief system for owner-occupiers (the richer you are, the bigger the subsidy you get).

The Department of the Environment was therefore given the task of undertaking this thorough review - internally. The Advisory Group was established to comment on a series of working papers from the DoE and to comment on evidence submitted by outside organisations.

'Green Paper'

When Peter Shore replaced Crosland the whole process was delayed as Shore made up his mind whether to continue the review or not. In the end he maintained the commitment to producing a major policy discussion paper - a "green paper". Indeed, the terms of reference were extended to include policy proposals made by other advisory committees - particularly the ones on New Forms of Housing Tenure and Social Ownership.



The Advisory Group will not be producing a collective view at the end, although individual members have submitted their own evidence. The group was selected by Crosland from a list of sympathetic experts with a builder and a building society man added (for balance). The final group includes a number of Labour Housing Committee Chairmen (like Mills from Camden), academics (like Della Nevitt from the London School of Economics and Mike Harloe from the Centre from Environmental Studies) and one or two other "experts" like Frank Layfield Q.C. (of rates reform fame).

Liaison Committees

Construction Exports - Construction Industry - Construction Manpower - Local Government Finance - Environmental Board - Regional Economic Development Councils - National Consultative Council (Building Industry) - National Housebuilding Council - Sutton Housing Trust.

Advisory Groups

New Forms of Tenure - Social Ownership - Housing Costs - Mobile Homes - House Purchase Finance. London Housing - Rent Rebates - Housing Co-ops - Commercial Property - New Town Finance - Housing Finance Review - Housing Services - Local Authority Housing - Housing Associations - Building Society Finance - Housing Research.

Who said What?

The list of evidence submitted to the Review reads like a who's who of influential lobbyists. Nearly 40 submissions were made, of which 12 have been published. Some of these submissions have been detailed in previous issues of Community Action.

Private or professional interests pushing their own case lead the list of submissions - British Property Federation, Housing Builders Federation, Building Societies Associations, Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, National House Building Council. Only the London Boroughs Association and the Housing Centre Trust have attempted a broader assessment, and for this reason their evidence has been well received by the DoE. They have also been well received because their conclusions are anything but radical - indeed the HCT favours the sale of council houses and shows a solid belief in home ownership.

Council Housing Attacked

In terms of publicity, the BSA and CIPFA evidence was widely reported, and both are now regularly used by the press in attacks on council housing.

The job of opposing the vested interests of the housing lobby has been left to Shelter and the Catholic Housing Aid Service, and only one submission from a tenants' group has been unearthed so far - from the Paddington Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations, who favoured a 'use-value' system of assessing rents in both the public and private sectors.

New Housing Act?

The DoE is keeping very quiet about what the review will eventually recommend. From information received as well as from Peter Shore's recent series of policy speeches, it seems fair to conclude that the emphasis will be on promoting new forms of housing tenure and owner-occupation, although extremely limited changes in the mortgage tax relief system may be proposed. Council tenants are likely to get another bashing on rents - although they may be thrown a sop in the form of a "new deal" tenants' charter. The overall emphasis will be the need to keep within the limits imposed on public expenditure.

The possibility of a major new housing act in the life of this government now seems slim - unless the government staggers on for two years or more.



CUTS NOOSE Social Ownership Study Group

THIS IS A 'STANDING COMMITTEE' chaired by Freeson, Minister for Housing and Construction, with the following terms of reference:

- * to examine programmes proposed by local authorities in England for (i) acquiring privately-owned dwellings and (ii) renovating council-owned dwellings;
- * to assess priorities for the allocation of available resources;

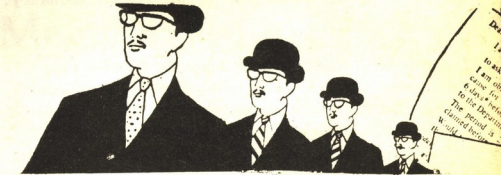
Structure

A three-part structure is used in practice:

*The Study Group, made up of councillors representing the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, Greater London Council, London Boroughs Association and the Association of District Councils together with DoE officials, chaired by Freeson.

*The Working Party, chaired by a DoE official, made up of officers from the various bodies.

*A DoE team of officials, some full, some part-time, whose job it is to "service" the two groups and prepare reports in draft.



Although the Study Group's 'First Report' came out in early 1976, the bulk of the report and its recommendations remained unaltered from the drafting stage in the DoE to final publication.

Rubber Stamp

The Working Party only met 6 times during this period, and the Study Group only 3 or 4 times. Given the DoE commitment in terms of staff, it is difficult to see how this could be much other than a rubber-stamping operation which gives the DoE views "respectability".

In essence the Study Group was discussing the best way to implement the cuts, especially in the Section 105 allocation, for council improvement programmes. The report mainly recommends that, given the fact that little money is available, local authorities should get more of it in the form of a block grant with fewer centralised controls and more autonomy for them in deciding how the money should be spent.

The local authority associations have allowed themselves to be co-opted into the process of how to cut the cake, instead of arguing that the size of the cake is the most important factor. This Study Group will continue to meet, but the local authority associations will find themselves in an increasingly difficult position as and when more cuts take place. Would you help organise your own hanging?

ADVANCE OR RETREAT?

Pilchered!

WORKING GROUP ON NEW FORMS OF HOUSING TENURE

REG FREESON SET UP a Working Group to examine tenant co-operatives and other "new forms of housing tenure" in November 1975. The Group first reported on tenant co-operatives, and the Government has issued Circulars to councils and supported co-ops in various ways since.

The Working Group's policies have been influenced more and more by the Government's desire for cuts in public spending and by a serious decline in the Government's commitment to council housing. The "new forms of tenure" which it has now turned its attention to have not been new socialist ideas based on more public spending, but essentially private enterprise schemes, like "equity sharing" and other schemes, based on attracting private capital and private landlords back into housing.



Now if you bought the place you could do your own repairs.

Instructions

The 2 main instructions the Group received from Freeson in November 1975 were:-

- To make recommendations on subsidies for equity sharing schemes for the Housing Finance Review;
- To examine schemes allowing councils and housing associations to lease property from private landlords.

In a report last Easter to the Housing Finance Review, the Group supported increased subsidies for equity sharing schemes like Birmingham Council's "half and half" scheme.

Empty Homes Sell-out

The Group is also examining, on the Government's instructions, ways of avoiding the requisitioning of empty property owned by private landlords. Many community groups have campaigned for requisitioning powers. The Working Group is looking for "alternatives" in which the landlord "licenses" his empty houses to the council or housing association for six months or a year, and the council nominates short-term tenants. This is clearly a straight alternative to a radical policy of compulsory purchase or requisitioning, which involve more public spending than licensing.

Both equity sharing and licensing are very likely to feature in the Government's Green Paper.

The Working Group's housing policies accurately reflect its membership. It includes Sir Dennis Pilcher:-

Vice-President of London Rent Assessment Panel 1966-70 * President of Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors 1963 * Advisor to the Government's Business Rents Directorate 1973.

He wrote the "Pilcher Report" last year as Chairman of the Government's Advisory Group on Commercial Property Development. This report attacked the "appalling consequences" of delays which it claims are due to public participation in planning decisions. Strange that he should, then, be associated with schemes for tenant participation in co-operatives!

Token tenant

But, of course, the Working Group does have its token tenant, from Fairhazel Co-op (Camden). Other Group members include the General Manager of Bradford and Bingley Building Society, a barrister specialising in property law, a senior partner in the construction firm of Jones, Lang and Wootton (J.W.Hughes, FRICS) and a Birmingham Labour councillor responsible for the equity sharing scheme there.

PLANNING PLANNING

A HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMITTEE of MP's is looking at public participation in planning. So far the Committee has taken a lot of evidence from the House Builders Federation, the British Property Federation, the Royal Institute of British Architects and other property interests claiming that public participation slows down their redevelopment plans, and is excessively costly, and ways should be found to cut down public debate over development schemes.

Closed to Community Groups

The North Southwark Community Development Group prepared its own evidence based on their experience to show that the public should be consulted earlier, and that there were clear social benefits for the community from increased public participation, rather than less!

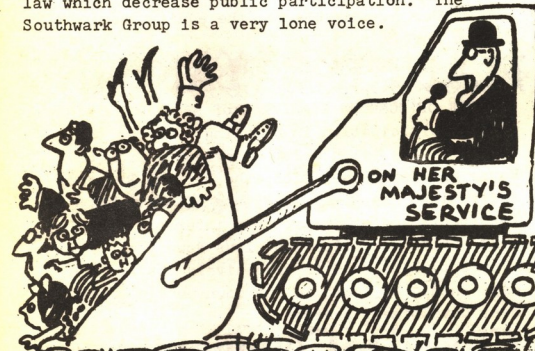
<p>The Government is to undertake a general review of the Rent Act, but this will not affect the law on security of tenure, the Environment Under-Secretary, Mr Guy Barnett, told the Commons.</p> <p>Preliminary work on the review was under way in his department and the Government would soon be issuing a consultation paper to invite the views of interested parties.</p> <p>Mr Barnett said the review would look at ways of making it easier for further categories of owners to recover possession of their property.</p>	<p>'RENT ACT REVIEW'</p> <p>Guardian 30.10.76</p> <p>Soon the Government will announce the setting up of the "Rent Act Advisory Group"</p>
--	--

On several occasions the committee refused to see the Southwark Group on the grounds that they were not a "national body"! The Southwark Group pointed out that there was no national body for community groups. And in any case, their experience was relevant to many inner city areas undergoing massive redevelopment. Finally, after representations made on their behalf by a local MP, the Committee gave way and has agreed to see them in December.

Open for Business

Yet the Committee has already met many of the major property interests in the U.K., as well as developers like Bovis Homes. They are due to meet middle class pressure groups like the Civic Trust in the autumn.

The ten MPs on the Committee include Tim Sainsbury (property owner), Michael Latham (ex-director of the House Builders Federation) and Arthur Jones (Bedford property dealer). If this Committee does not actually collapse under the weight of propaganda from business interests opposed to public participation, it will almost certainly bend to their wishes, and produce a report recommending changes in planning law which decrease public participation. The Southwark Group is a very lone voice.



SHOULD YOU GET INVOLVED?

THERE WILL BE TIMES when a community group or tenants association decides that they want to give evidence to one of these government committees -

- ★ As part of their campaign over an issue like empty homes or public participation
- ★ As part of the campaign in their area

The government's latest moves to set up a 'Rent Act Review' is a further opportunity for groups to press for greater tenants' protection. For it is already clear that behind this 'Review' the government is looking for ways to loosen up tenants rights. See our Press Cutting, page 35.

If your group is considering whether to give evidence to one of the committees, there are a number of questions and issues which need to be

It is no secret in Whitehall that paid public appointments go to what have become known as the great and the good, the sage army of tried and reliable citizens. A central list - or, more precisely, 10 grey filing cabinets and a master index in the corner of a room in the old Admiralty building overlooking the Horse Guards - contains the curriculum vitae and "pen pictures" of five thousand people deemed suitable for public appointment. The Public Appointments Unit holds and coordinates the central list.

BIG DADDY'S
ARMY!

'The Growth
of State
Patronage'

Times 6.10.76

taken account of:

Points:

➤ Who sits on the committee? What are the vested interests represented from the housing lobby?

➤ Why was the committee set up, and what are its 'terms of reference'? What is the political context in which the committee operates - for example, the pressure for more cuts in public spending?

➤ Preparing and presenting evidence can be very time consuming and expensive - e.g. in travelling, typing and duplicating costs. Would this take time, energy and other resources away from other activities?

➤ The Committees may have greater access to "technical" advice, e.g. from civil servants. If you are invited to go to see the Committee, are you willing to be drawn into a technical discussion on what may be a key political issue?

➤ It is worth thinking about the propaganda value in giving evidence. Can you use the occasion to get press or radio coverage?

You can find the answers to some of these questions on membership, the terms of reference of a committee, and so on, by keeping an eye on the Press, by ringing the Department of the Environment Press Office (01-212-3434) or by contacting Community Action.

There is one obvious danger - the only effect your evidence may have is to enable the Committee to say it has "consulted community groups". You must be prepared for this, and not let them get away with it.

THE 'HOUSING LOBBY'

ISSUE NO 26 Building Societies & Contractors
27 the Professionals
28 the Spiders Web

LETTERS

Send your letters to
Community Action,
P.O. Box 665,
London SW1 X 8DZ

Dear Community
Action



Your last issue contained a short but uncritical review of "Batley Welfare Benefits Project" - one of York University's new ventures in academic imperialism called "Papers in Community Studies".

York Univeristy Staff, who really had very little to do with Batley, are putting their own views of the CDP welfare rights campaign there a couple of years ago. These views, and the reports main suggestion of computerised comprehensive means test had nothing to do with the campaign nor with working class community action.

Whose interest?

They claim that the interests of the bureaucrats who run the means test system is the same as the interests of claimants: that the state is on the side of working class people. You only have to look at the recent record of the 'Labour' Government to know what rubbish this is. York University saw welfare rights as a way "to help central and local government agencies to administer their schemes more effectively". Computerised means tests are a pet idea of various liberal academics in the Child Poverty Action Group - a proposal financed by multinational computer firms like IBM.

Not only does this proposal ignore the level of cash claimants get, it also makes it simple for the state to extend means testing, and to make cuts at the press of a button. And what odds for an easy computerised tie up with central criminal records - all single Irish claimants are already automatically referred to special branch.

York criticises the welfare rights campaign as "overambitious", that it did not pursue High Court test cases (another largely futile CPAG idea),

REPORTS & THINGS

THE BATTLE FOR TOLMERS SQUARE by Nick Wates.
Price £2.95, published by Routledge and Kegan Paul

This is the story of the struggle by the people living and working in Tolmers Square, London against redevelopment and property speculation stretching back over nearly 20 years. The book exposes the motives and methods of property developers here and

the workers were "unsuitable" and had "a reputation as troublemakers" (troublemakers for whom?): the workers were overburdened with claimants and yet gave no local advice surgeries or door to door advice (a contradictory position caused by another pet scheme from York).



The welfare rights workers saw welfare rights as part of the tools of community action groups - and later together with other community workers, had to resign from CDP, because the local authority would not allow CDP to honour its promises to support independant working class organisations such as the Advice Centre for the Town, which was set up by local tenants fighting the Housing Finance Act. (the story is in past issues of Community Action). York claim that the welfare rights campaign was limited because CDP didn't initiate ACT!

Manipulating reformers

Such a statement reveals their total lack of understanding about working class organisation which appears to terrify academic liberals. They claim it is possible that the state will improve the living standards of working class people if professional reformers manipulate well enough and ask nicely enough of the right people. This idea is more than just an insult to the working people who have fought long and hard to wring concessions in the form of the welfare state. It is dangerous because it claims that there is an alternative to grass roots, rank and file militancy and organisation.

fraternally,

Richard Laver (ex CDP welfare rights worker)
C/o ACT, 104 Commercial St, Batley, West Yorks.

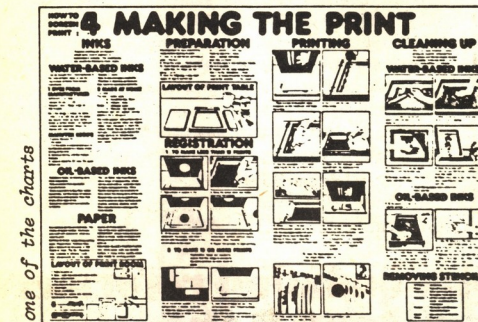


everywhere, shows how a Labour Council was sucked in to a planning deal with Joe Levy and Stock Conversion Ltd, and describes in detail the activities and organisation of the residents and workers.

REPORTS & THINGS REPORTS & THINGS REF

How To Screen Print - In Four Easy Wallcharts
£5.00 plus post. from: Chris Treweek, 34 Oakfield Road, London N4.

Set of 4 simple wallcharts (measuring 83x60cm each printed in 2 colours) describing most aspects of screen printing from making your own equipment, use of stencils and photographic methods, types of paper and inks to addresses of material suppliers; as well as a step by step method of the process. Although designed with playschemes, youth clubs, and groups such as tenants assoc. - who might need to print posters quickly & cheaply - in mind, the price is high unless your group does want to do a lot of this type of printing.



ACTION IN WANDSWORTH by Pavement. 100 pp; 50p + post from Pavement, 28 Wandle Road, London SW17.

'A handbook of activities, social, political and cultural in the London Borough of Wandsworth' produced by the Wandsworth socialist community paper, Pavement, which is now five years old. Comprehensive guide to local action and services, including sections on community, gay, prisoners, trade union, and left wing political groups active in the area.

COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS OF NORTHERN IRELAND - FIRST ANNUAL REPORT. 39pp; unpriced from CONI, c/o Colm Cavanagh, 51 Troy Park, Londonderry. tel: 0504-63183.

A word-by-word account of the discussions at CONI's first AGM. Much of it is about a constitution and organisation, but it does provide an insight into the progress of Community Action in Ulster.

A STATE OF DISREPAIR by Alan Walker. 50pp; 40p + post from Colchester Poverty Action Group, c/o CPAG, 1 Macklin Street, Drury Lane, London WC2.

Report of a survey of council housing in Colchester. Argues that the number of council houses in serious need of repair is at least twice, possible three or four times the official estimate.



Big Hill Adventure Playground, 1973-1976, 70p plus post. from: Big Hill Adventure Playground Association, c/o 81 High Street, Cleator Moor, Cumbria.

30 page report with lots of photographs which argues a strong case for adventure play by allowing the reader to have a glimpse of what it actually is like. It also raises other, wider, questions about established attitudes to new ideas and about the fight that even children have to obtain reasonable play facilities.

COMPULSORY IMPROVEMENT NOTICES DON'T WORK. SAE from Benwell Grove Residents Assoc. Development Group, 45 Benwell Grove, Newcastle on Tyne 4.

Reports a survey of 22 compulsory improvement notices and 20 compulsory repair notices served on a block of terraced flats in North Benwell General Improvement Area. Concludes, after monitoring for nearly a year, that compulsory improvement notices don't work as a means of assisting residents get improvements done quickly. Main problems - the bureaucracy, lack of finance, and inadequate legislation.

FOOD CO-OPS. by Colin Hines. 50pp; 60p + 9p post from Friends of the Earth, 9 Poland Street, London W1 (01-434-1684)

Sub-titled "How to save money by getting together and buying in bulk", this is a handy, readable and comprehensive introductory guide to Food Co-ops.

COMMUNITY LAWYER

ADAMSDOWN COMMUNITY AND ADVICE CENTRE, a neighbourhood Law Centre in Cardiff requires a Community Lawyer to start as soon as possible. Applicants should have approximately three years experience since qualifying. Further details from Robert Simpson, Adamsdown Community and Advice Centre, 103 Clifton Street, Adamsdown, Cardiff. Tel.(0222) 498117.

Workers Wanted

Community Action Manchester need long/short-term workers, full/part time, salary low, drivers preferred. Contact Community Action Manchester, Students Union, Oxford Road, Manchester 1

WOMENS AID

Kent Women's Aid needs a resident housemother, (children welcome) to help run a refuge. Rent free accommodation offered. For further details please phone Medway 61911.

WORKERS' CHRONICLE

PUBLISHED BY NEWCASTLE ON TYNE TRADES COUNCIL FOR WORKERS ON TYNE AND WEAR

For almost three years now we have been publishing Workers Chronicle on Tyneside - one of the very few worker's papers put out on a regular basis covering both industrial and community news. Already two other Trades Councils, after discussion with us, have set up similar papers. We believe that others could do so also, and we have therefore put together four sample back copies, plus the current issue. These are available for 25p, including postage, from John Darwin, 16 Windsor Terrace, Newcastle on Tyne NE2 4HE.

CONFERENCE ON DIRECT ACTION + CRIMINAL TRESPASS

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- A. **Green bans** in New South Wales and Birmingham and trade union and community joint direct action in general.
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- G. **Direct Action and The Cuts** Direct action as a tactic in fighting specific cuts, its effectiveness looked at in a local 'context'.
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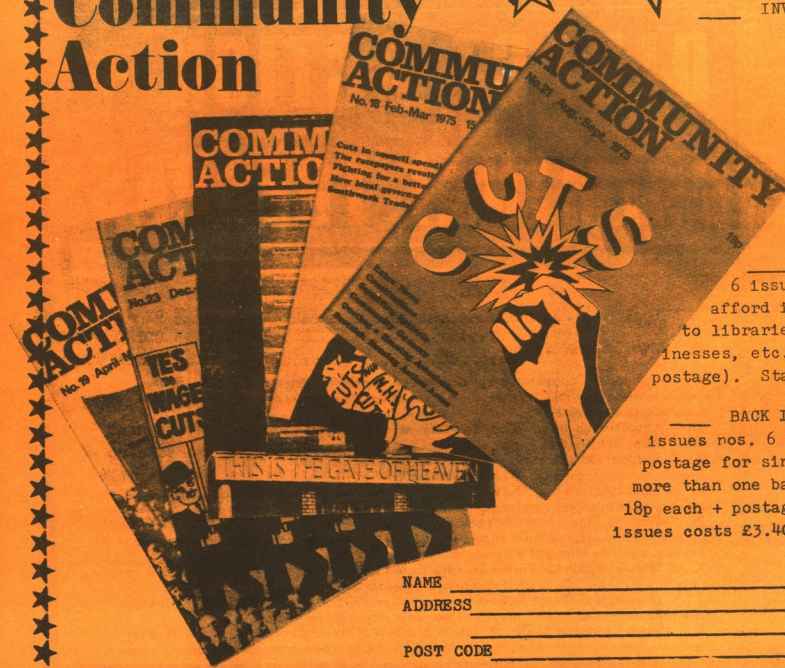
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COMMUNITY ACTION CONTENTS

- 3 NEWS & VIEWS
- 12 THREAT TO DIRECT ACTION
- 15 CAMPAIGNING & ENTERTAINING
- 20 Housing Lobby 4: INSIDE THE
CIVIL SERVICE
- 24 SLIDIE JO WHITTER
- 26 FIGHTING FOR UNDER~5s
- 30 DIRECT LABOUR UNDER ATTACK
- 31 CUTS: Latest cuts, IMF deal,
Health cuts
- 34 MORE NEWS
- 36 WINDOW CLEANING CAMPAIGN
- 38 REPORTS & THINGS

Published by

Community Action
PO Box 665
London SW1X 8DZ
phone 01-235-3465 (evenings only)

Editorial Group

Dave Ferris
Philip Pearson
Peta Sissons
Dexter Whitfield

Thanks to the following for their help in putting this issue together: Nick Vernede, Judy Viscardi, Mark Rusher, Jen McClelland, Carolyn Wiles, Steve Hilditch, Philip Wolmuth, Dave Simmonds, Debbie Worsley, Terry Smith, Kavanagh (Cartoon Collective), Jane Matheson, Nick Sharman.

Community Action is an entirely independent non-profit magazine. All those involved are unpaid.

Bookshop Distribution by: Publication Distribution Cooperative, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1

MAGAZINE NEWS

We now have an office, our first in 5 years of producing the magazine, and have also set up the magazine as a Company, limited by guarantee, i.e. not for profit.

NEW OFFICE *****

We built the office ourselves, in an old warehouse which we share with Spare Rib, the Publications Distribution Cooperative, and CounterAct. The office address is 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1, but the magazine's postal address is still P.O. Box 665, London SW1X 8DZ.

The magazine is still only produced in the evenings and at the weekends, so if you want to telephone us, call either the old number - 01-235 3465 (most evenings or at the weekend) - or the new office number - 01-251 3008 (Monday evenings are the best time).

COMPANY *****

Community Action is now registered as a 'Company Limited by Guarantee'. This means we continue as a non-profit making organisation, but the financial liability of the people involved is limited by law.

CONTROL *****

We spent a great deal of time and effort, with the help of a friendly solicitor, working out a democratic structure for the company. The key feature of the new legal structure is that the people who produce the magazine and who have editorial control and responsibility are also the full members of the company. So we don't have a separate Board of Directors, or any "sleeping partners" who could exercise control over the magazine's policy and finances.

If any group wants to make use of our experience of setting up this type of company, please contact us.

Registered address

The company's official name, registration number and registered address are:
Community Action Magazine Ltd.,
27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

Company number: 1272151

HELP! *****

We always need help in the time-consuming jobs of mailing out the magazine, doing envelopes, typing, etc. If you would like to help in any way perhaps a half-day or evening every month, please let us know.

NEWS & VIEWS

CUTS CAMPAIGNS THE FIGHTBACK GATHERS NEW STRENGTH

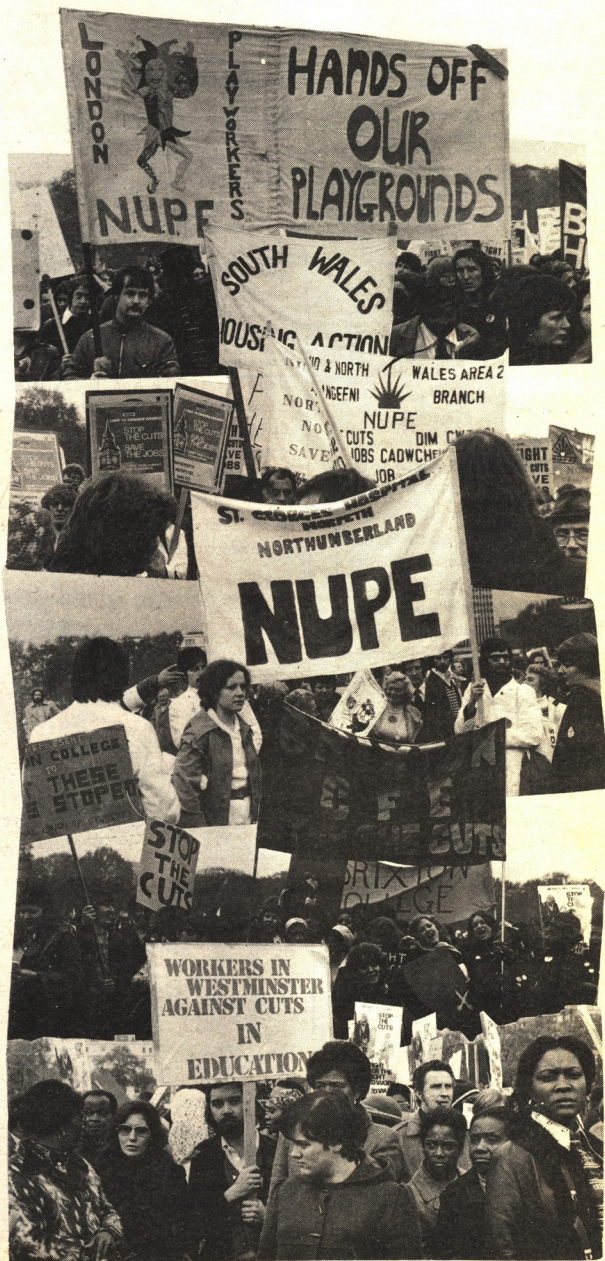
"The march was really great... I got really hoarse from all the shouting and singing that I did."

This is how one worker from St Mary's Hospital in London described how she felt on the November 17th demo against the cuts...it was her first. The demo was incredible. Over 60,000 people gathered in Hyde Park. In fact it was so big that it took about 3½ hours for it just to get out of the park!

A Liverpool hospital worker gives her account of the demo.

"There seemed to be more people in Hyde Park than I'd ever seen before. Some said nearly as many as the great demo against the Industrial Relations Act.

Euston was overrun with women and men with stickers, badges and banners against the cuts. We spilled out of the train and into the demonstration in support of the workers who are occupying the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for Women against its planned closure. At Marble Arch we got into the park, and it was chaos; thousands and thousands of people with banners made specially for the occasion and Trade Union banners from all the public sector unions and also the Miners, the AUEW and the GPO, to mention a few. They came from all over - Glasgow, Cornwall, Wales, the lot. There were large contingents of hospital workers. Schools and colleges closed in London be-



cause caretakers teachers and pupils came on the demo."

"It's ordinary people who always have to suffer. NHS cuts for instance hit those people who can't afford to pay. It's all right for private patients, they can afford to pay.

The turnout was over 60,000, and I was really disappointed when I saw how little publicity we got in the press."

(worker from St Marys Hospital, Paddington, London)

The government had tried its hardest to stop the demo before it even happened, and they must have been surprised at its size. They must now be aware that whatever they are told to do by the IMF, they are not going to find it that easy to push through enormous cuts in the public sector.

It's not surprising that the press and the news on the TV really tried to play the whole demonstration down. (It was a small item on the nine o'clock news).

Even a demonstration the size of the one on November 17th is not going to stop the government imposing more cuts on our public services, although it was really great and will provide a huge impetus to all the local struggles that are going on against them.

Public Sector unions will fight on together

Leaders of the public sector unions have agreed to continue their united opposition to cuts in public spending.

The organisation developed to run the November 17 march in London will be continued. The steering group, comprising representatives from all the major public sector unions (representing over 2½ million workers) is organising a national conference in March, together with a national publicity campaign in January - to show how cuts affect peoples' lives.

The steering group - meeting monthly - will also act as a clearing house for information collected by each union. Most importantly, it will coordinate local industrial action against cuts.

At the moment the aim is to have one-day token strikes and demonstrations in each region.

Strike Action in West Midlands

Following up on the Nov 17 demonstration, NUPE organised a one-day strike and day of action in the West Midlands against the public spending cuts. 20,000 public service workers went on strike in Birmingham and 50,000 others took other forms of industrial action. In Coventry, 6,000 went on strike and there was also strike action in Stafford, Solihull and other areas. Five rallies were held in the Midlands area, there was a large march through Birmingham city centre and over 1,000 marched in Stafford.

The strike forced the closure of over 1,000 schools and colleges in the West Midlands. Many council facilities were closed, refuse collections halted and non-essential hospital services curtailed by the action of telephonists, porters, domestic and catering staff and other hospital workers.

Cuts Action ~ Scotland

● Over 1,000 building workers from Glasgow's Direct Works Department held a ½-day strike and marched to the town hall as part of their campaign to stop the council sacking 800 building workers.

● The Scottish TUC organised a demonstration against unemployment which was supported by 8,000 workers, mainly from NALGO, NUPE and EIS (Scottish teachers union).

● NALGO is expected to hold a day of action in Scotland in January - NUPE will give its full support.



March in Birmingham during the strike.

NOTTINGHAM

DRAMA IN HOUSING ACTION AREA

Cromwell Street, with its tall houses and cobbled street, has been much discussed for years. Depending on where you stood it was a housing area of either numerous problems or of great potential.

Although it has only been a Housing Action Area (HAA) for six months, the whole issue of exactly what was to be done about our houses has been actively forgotten over the last two years.

At a public Inquiry residents presented their own case for



Mr A. V. Osof, Principal Development and Improvement Officer responsible for the implementation of the Cromwell Street and Portland Road Housing Action Area, with some of the houses of Cromwell Street in the background

MOTORWAY MONTHLY



"The trouble with these objectors is they're nothing better to do!"

ECONOMIC BENEFIT

According to a report in the Times of 12th August, 1976, the police in Yorkshire claim that the construction of the M62 has widened criminals' scope. The head of the regional crime squad is quoted as saying: "Suddenly Lancashire criminals are committing serious crimes in Yorkshire, Humberside and Lincolnshire. The M62 gives criminals quick access and a fast getaway from an area that was previously too far away for them." So that's what is meant by the economic benefits of motorways.

First issue out in Dec.76 includes a useful listing of dates, addresses, etc. for objections to major road schemes around the country. Also useful news for groups fighting road schemes. 12 issues for £2.50 (expensive for only 4 pages) from Motorway Monthly, 9 Poland Street, London W 1.

retaining these houses, and the Inspector agreed that although the houses were unfit, demolition was not the best course of action open to the Council. They were told to go away and consider alternative strategies.

An early start?

Initially they went into a huddle. We could not get to see anyone, speak to anyone, or even get a reply from anyone connected with the fate of our area. However, continuous pressuring eventually paid off when we heard that the Council had Government approval for declaring an HAA. The Council's intentions were spelt out quite clearly in the policy statement to the Housing Committee on 3 June 1976. They stated: "The prime objective in the Cromwell St/Portland Rd area will of course be to ensure that the houses are put into good repair and as many as possible improved as a matter of urgency. The Council will be able to work on the Council-owned houses at an early date." (para 17). Lucky old us, thought Council tenants, being off to such a

quick start. (Little did they know!)

Keystone Cops!

This area is very small for an HAA (only 78 houses) and the thinking was apparently that since it was the first one in the City, the Council would be able to cut their teeth on something fairly manageable to start with. The one thing we did know for certain was that the Council were creating a special "team" - the cream from a wide range of departments, crackshots the lot of them - to deal with the area. What a build-up they had! It was so good that it took us almost six months to realise that they had sent in, not the Sweeney, but the Keystone Cops.

Action man

In the six months it has been going, the only "action" has come from the residents. The council itself has done nothing visible. Of the 14 houses owned by them (many empty and derelict) only one has been renovated - and this was to provide an office for the "Action Team"!

It is hardly surprising therefore that the residents

are now feeling pretty sickened by the Council's double talk. Certainly the comments by Mr Arthur Oscoft Principle Development and Improvements Officers, to a local newspaper, who photographed him on probably his only visit to Cromwell St, now have a very hollow ring.

Participation con

The clear commitment was that the Council would set the ball rolling by improving their properties, as quickly as possible. Since then, we have been rushing around like mad working out plans and ideas with other residents, feeding these ideas into the team and waiting for ACTION. All this in response to the Council's commitment to us that "We want them involved every step of the way." Only now are we seeing how much of a con all this has been.

Ignored by the council

The way in which participation has been worked here is a sham. Most of the issues raised by residents at our very first meeting with the Action Team seem to have been ignored. Our questions about fact and policy have been answered in terms of "committee procedures" and "departmental responsibilities". Our enthusiasm and ideas have been treated as meddling rather than sharing, and the only time we have felt wanted was when the Council asked us to clear the rubbish from the area. In all this time we have got no nearer to the source of decision making than the motley collection of tea-boys and ticket collectors who make up the Action Team.

Standstill

We have put forward all sorts of proposals which we are assured would be put to "the committee" or "our superiors" and yet we have never been allowed to see any of the policy papers which have resulted from this. In fact we have only just realised

that, in terms of policy, there is absolutely nothing we know for certain. All we have had are verbal assurances by the Team, but in writing ... nothing.

The latest unofficial whisper is that the HAA has come to a standstill and the Council does not even have any plans for renovating its own properties at the moment. The side effect of this is that they have used the renovation idea to avoid doing any substantial repairs to Council property.

We were mislead

We held a meeting with residents from an HAA in Wolverhampton to find out more about what the Council could do in the area if pushed. We discovered that a lot of the things the Council had told us about HAA's were either not true or were misleading. For example, we were told that the work had to take place over 5 years (i.e. the "life" of the HAA) - but of course we real-

ised that most HAAs are several times larger than ours and that there was no reason why all the work couldn't be done in our HAA in a much shorter time.

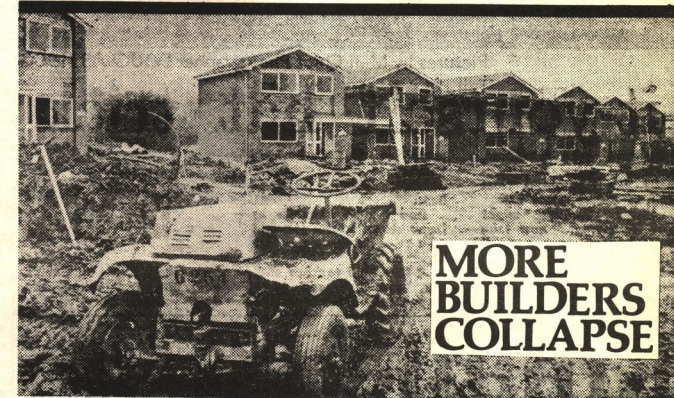
Perhaps understandably, we are feeling very angry. We are trying to become involved in any decision made about the area, but involvement is a two-way process and without cooperation we are finding it an uphill struggle.

If there are any other groups in HAAs who have experienced this sort of local authority inertia and have overcome it, we would welcome any advice you can give us.

As a Christmas present to the Council, we have written ourselves and performed a pantomime with songs about the council's lack of progress in the area, and called it "The Long, Long Trail"!!

Contact: Rita Elliott,
Residents Group, 33 Cromwell
Street, Nottingham.

0602- 74377



ALL QUIET ... on Greaves' de Montfort Park estate at Shirley.

Despite the campaign by the National Federation of Building Trades Employers (see page 30) claiming the virtues of "free enterprise" builders, 2 West Midlands housebuilding firms went bust late last year. David Charles Homes collapsed owing over £12m and the Greaves Organisation, which built cheap "starter" houses for first time buyers, collapsed leaving 320 building workers unemployed. Both companies went bust mainly because they owned large chunks of land - David Charles had over £30m invested in land, Greaves over £5m, acquired mainly during the property boom - and they had to borrow to pay for this land (now worth less as land values have fallen) over short periods, paying high interest rates. The banks refused further loans on an investment which they regarded as an increasingly "bad risk".

LONDON

LOCAL FIGHT AGAINST RACISM GROWS

ALARM - the All-Lambeth Anti-Racist Movement - was formally set up at a meeting in Lambeth Town Hall in September. Since then it has been meeting regularly approximately once a fortnight. At its last meeting about 40 people turned up.

During the past 2 months, the most pressing problem has been the appearance of the National Front in Brixton and their candidacy (along with the National Party) in the Angell Ward Bye-Election. ALARM's activity has tended to focus around this issue.

Local activities

So far, we have organised these events:

- street meetings in Streatham and Brixton, and distribution of anti-racist and anti-fascist literature virtually every Saturday during the period.

- supporting the demonstration called to protest at the decision by the ILEA to allow the National Front to hold an election meeting in Loughborough School. The demonstration was supported by 400 people, almost all of whom live locally.

- canvassing in the Angell Ward urging people to vote for anti-fascist candidates.

- producing 4 separate leaflets on various matters - including supporting the TUC/Labour Party demonstration against racialism.

- helping to co-ordinate the defence of the people arrested after the National Front provoked an incident outside Brixton Tube. ALARM also initiated the protest at the Front's action and the police complicity.

Delegates invited

ALARM has set up a co-ordinating committee but is still meeting regularly to discuss



future activities and campaigns. It is hoped that ALARM will continue to build its delegate base and so only delegates may vote on matters of policy. Individuals are still welcome.

In the future, ALARM plans:

- ★ an all-London demonstration on racism in early March
- ★ a delegate conference on Racism and Fascism to help continue the campaign.

Organisations affiliated to ALARM include:

Lambeth Trades Council
Lambeth NUT
Lambeth NALGO
CPSA (S.E. London DHSS Branch)
Help '71, and
South Bank Poly Students Union.

For more information, contact
ALARM, c/o South Bank Poly S.U.
7 Rotary Street, London SE1.

BURNLEY

RESIDENTS FIGHT HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY

For the last 1½ years, working mainly within a Clearance Area,

the Burnley Wood Action Group has been campaigning for a policy of Community Based Renewal so that

- ▶ all the residents who want to can be rehoused by the Council in the new houses now being built on cleared sites, next to the Clearance Area.
- ▶ all the residents who want to stay can be guaranteed one of the houses, and
- ▶ the Council lets these houses in advance, so that residents who are staying know where and when they will be rehoused.

The Council is opposing our ideas - it goes against their

by Marcel Berlins
Legal Correspondent

A Criminal Justice Bill, to be published on Tuesday, will implement the main recommendations of two of the most controversial reports in the area of law and order. It also increases to a maximum of £1,000 fines for hooliganism.

As part of a general reform of the law of conspiracy the Bill creates new offences that can be committed by squatters and people.

Times, 25 November 1976

standard allocation system - yet our policies even reflect government advice which says that: "Wherever possible, those who wish - or who for various reasons, need - to stay in the same locality after rebuilding is completed should be helped to do so, and the redevelopment process planned to take this into account" (see Department of Environment Circular number 13/75)

Contacting other groups

After organising visits to the Glodwick Action Group in Oldham and the Rocheford Tenants' Association in Leeds (see CA No. 16, p. 5, No. 28, p. 11) where this policy has been adopted, we carried out our own Survey which showed that 54% of all the Clearance Area residents wanted to be rehoused by the Council in the same area. The results of the Survey have been written up in a report which shows, in detail, how the policy could be successfully carried out

"It's impossible"

The report has not yet been discussed in the Housing Committee, but when it was publicised and whenever the idea of Community Based Renewal has been raised in the local papers, the Housing Chairman has come out with 'reasons' why it's impossible.

These are usually totally inconsistent with each other. He has claimed that the policy is a "paper ideology," then he said that the Council is already carrying it out. He claimed that it's "unrealistic" (because people will change their minds about wanting to stay) and that it costs too much. His latest reaction is that it's unnecessary because he believes that many of the Clearance Area residents have moved into the area only fairly recently, yet our Survey shows that 76% of residents have lived in the area for more than ten years.

Council cover-up

It has now become clear that

these reactions are a cover up for the real reason, which is the Council's housing allocation system. One of our ward councillors told us that:

- all applicants for Council housing are 'graded' into 4 categories (A,B,C,D) according to how the Housing Visitors assess their cleanliness (including their bed linen).
- that these 4 grades exclude the so-called problem families, who fall into yet another category.
- that people in grades C and D very seldom get offered new Council houses, only relets.
- that, if other Clearance Areas are anything to go by, a substantial proportion of residents will be in grades C and D, and
- that therefore they can't be offered the new houses in the area.

Degrading system

This means that our campaign for Burnley Wood Houses for Burnley Wood People has become a fight against the Council's whole allocation system. We are arguing that this system is degrading and that every family should be given the chance of a new house and a new start in life. This view is supported by the Government-commissioned Cullingworth Report on Council Housing: Purposes, Procedures and Priorities (HMSO 1969) which states that the purpose of visits from the Housing Department should be "giving information and advice, rather than assessing housing standards and 'suitability' for different standards of Council housing".

An objection to the Compulsory Purchase Order has been organised and the Action Group may have to argue the case for Community Based Renewal at the Public Inquiry.

Copies of our report: Survey Results, Conclusions and Proposed Action available from

Adrian Ayers, Chairman, Burnley Wood Action Group, 85 Waterloo Road, Burnley, Lancs. for 35p (including postage).

So Predictable!

As we predicted in our September issue (see CA no. 27, p. 36), the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors has published a housing report arguing strongly for the expansion of home ownership and higher council rents. This report has come too late to be submitted to the Government's Housing Policy Review. But the publicity it received adds to the momentum of the demand for more cuts in council housing.

The Royal Institute has 50,000 members, including valuers, surveyors, estate agents and planners in private practice, central government and local government. It has 160 full time staff, and is one of the strongest professional interest groups in the housing lobby.

This is what the RICS say-

«There are already more than enough council houses to cope with the number of people who prefer to remain council tenants.» So housing subsidies should be for promoting owner-occupation, such as cheap loans to first time buyers. Council houses should be sold.

'Free market'

All rents should be based on "free market" rent levels. So council rents should be raised in stages of £1.50 per year minimum, until they reach these levels, and would continue to rise. The private rented sector should be "stimulated" by relaxing rent controls. These "free market" housing policies will doubtless please their members in private practice and make "sense" to their cost-cutting colleagues in central government.



Kids Safety Charter

There has been a series of serious accidents to children in Wapping caused by old play equipment in parks. Wapping Parents Action Group are starting a Campaign for a Childrens Safety Charter and are asking parents to write to Peter Shore, Minister of the D.O.E. and to the British Standards Institute (who are currently revising their standards for play equipment).

How old is the equipment in your local park?
When did the Council last check it for faults?
Have children been injured in your area?

Write to:

WPAG
Mrs Maureen Davies
115 Riverside Mansion
Wapping
London E1

British Standards Institute
Mr. Stevans (Secretary)
2 Park St
London W1

LONDON ISLINGTON TENANTS WIN 'TEST CASE' CPO

The first major Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) within a Housing Action Area (HAA) in London was confirmed by the Department of the Environment on 25 November 1976, after a three year campaign by local tenants.

The CPO covers 32 properties in Grosvenor Avenue, N5, in Islington within the Beresford Road HAA. Since the CPO resolution in January 1975 the Council has acquired some 24 other properties by agreement.

As a result, the Council can now control all the houses in the street apart from ten which were excluded either because they are owner-occupied or because the existing owner is capable of

THE GREAT SALES ROBBERY

This 20 page illustrated pamphlet is sponsored by 33 tenants federations, Trades Councils, Cuts Campaigns, and local Labour Parties. The pamphlet covers not only the sale of existing council houses but also the sale of land earmarked for council housing to private builders, equity sharing and build-for-sale schemes. The pamphlet explains -

- Why council housing is so important
- Why all sales must be stopped
- Who's demanding the sale of council houses
- Sales campaigns around Britain
- Action by tenants and workers

PRICE

1 copy	6p	— plus	9p post
10 copies	55p (save 5p)	— plus	29p post
25 "	£1.25p (save 25p)	— plus	70p post
50 "	£2.40p (save 60p)	— plus	85p post
100 "	£4.70p (save £1.30)	plus	£1.10 post

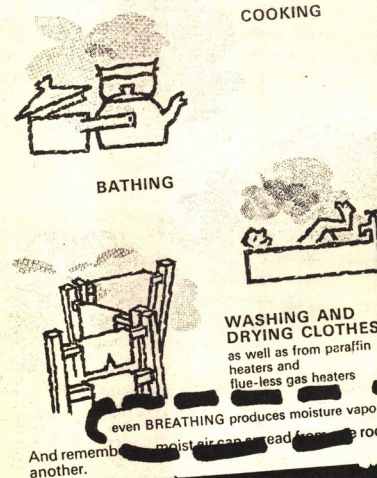
FROM

SCAT, 31 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (Tel. 01-253 3627)
(cheques/postal orders payable to SCAT)

CONDENSATION

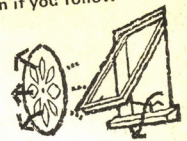
is the water produced when warm moist air, vapour or steam comes into contact with any cold surface—windows, walls, floors. It can damage clothes, bedding, floor coverings, decorations and the house itself. It can cause mould growth on walls and ceilings.

Moist air can come from



You can reduce condensation if you follow these simple rules:

- 1 see that your rooms are always warm and properly ventilated
- 2 when cooking keep the kitchen door shut and window open
- 3 when bathing, washing and drying clothes, and after bathing keep room door shut and window open
- 4 if you use a paraffin heater or flue-less gas heater be sure the window is open a little (remember that every gallon of paraffin burnt produces 10 pints of water)
- 5 in cold weather keep some heating on all the time
- 6 if the house is unoccupied during the day leave the heating on if you use a coal fire it up and round



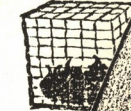
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keep some heating on all the time

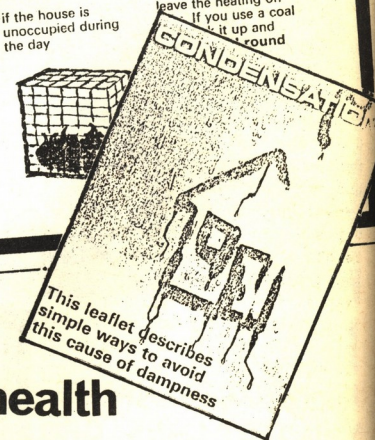
leave the heating on if you use a coal fire it up and round



GOVERNMENT WARNING Breathing can damage your health

Prepared for the Ministry of Public Building and Works, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, the Welsh Office and the Scottish Development Department by the Central Office of Information, 1967.

and now distributed by the National Federation of Housing Associations



This leaflet describes simple ways to avoid this cause of dampness

bringing them up to an acceptable standard for the present tenants.

Important precedent

The approval of a "block" CPO sets an important precedent for other councils anxious to buy up and improve terraces and whole streets in HAAs.

By 1970 the 5-storey, hundred year old houses were run down and in overcrowded multiple-occupation. The signs were that the area would be next for the attentions of property speculators and "gentrifiers" following Barnsbury to the west.

Holloway Neighbourhood Law Centre workers started visiting, and in late 1974 the Grosvenor Avenue Tenants Association (GATA) was formed. The Council, prompted by the tenants, resolved to make the CPO on all the houses in the street - some 70 houses - in Jan. 1975.

Public Inquiry

In early 1975 the Tenants Association carried out an intensive survey of tenants in the street which revealed the extent of non-repair, lack of amenities, harassment, over-crowding. The survey also

showed that the vast majority of the tenants wanted to stay in the street, and to have the area rehabilitated, rather than demolished and redeveloped.

Local tenant Charlotte Baggins says: "The street is 90% tenants accommodation. The houses are in terrible condition. GATA has fought from the beginning for better housing. We called for the CPO and we presented a detailed case at the Public Inquiry in February 1976 supporting the Council, arguing against particular owners who objected, and

explaining why the CPO was essential for tenants."

Tenants solidarity

In July 1975, the Council, again supported by GATA, declared the Beresford Rd HAA which covered 327 houses including those in Grosvenor Avenue. GATA then helped tenants to organise in the rest of the HAA - in order to work out their needs and to make demands on the Council. Two streets in the area already had residents groups set up. The proportion of resident owner-occupiers in the whole area is only about 13%, but from the start GATA felt that the tenants' interests could only be properly developed through exclusively tenant groups - especially in the context of HAA legislation, where the interests of tenants and resident owners are at best different, and in the case of resident landlords (75% of the resident owners) and tenants, often directly opposed to each other. This is all the more important as the tenants in Grosvenor Avenue, for example, are from many ethnic groups including West Indian, African, Turkish, Irish, Spanish.

Houses deteriorate

A sub-committee to the Council's Housing Committee was set up for the HAA, and the tenants fought to have representation in proportion on the sub-committee. In the event, GATA has two reps.

Over the past year there has been much to discourage the tenants: houses have deteriorated, not much rehabilitation has taken place, the Council's understanding of "participation" has been found to be different to that of the tenants, many people have moved out or been rehoused elsewhere.

Also, the difference of interests between tenants and resident owners has become more apparent. Harrassment has continued, and there has

been doubt as to whether the CPO would ever succeed.

Ten month's wait

News of the DoE's decision to confirm the CPO last week comes therefore none too soon. A delay of ten months between Public Inquiry and the decision seems inexcusable. GATA intends to push for prompt action now by the Council in following through the CPO, and to participate in the plans for the rehabilitation. There is also a growing number of tenants in the area who are interested in setting up a tenant cooperative which will give tenants more control over their housing for the future. The cooperative is expected to get started shortly.

Technical note

Islington Council based the CPO on Part 5 of the 1957 Housing Act. They could just as well have used the new CPO powers under the 1974 Housing Act, which introduced the HAA powers. The council chose the 1957 Act, as the CPO resolution went through only just after the 1974 Act was passed. From now on, groups should base any campaign for "block" CPOs on the 1974 Act.

Holloway Neighbourhood Law Centre, c/o Martin Luther King Centre, Sheringham Road, London N7 8NX. Tel: 01-607 2524.

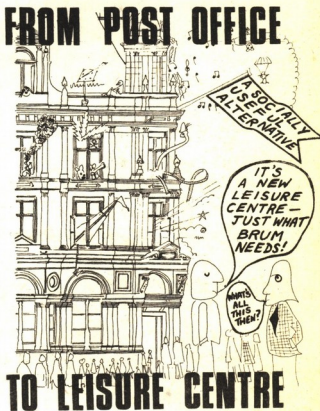
**BIRMINGHAM
'GREEN BAN'
CAMPAIGN**

Last November, the Green Ban Action Committee (GBAC) met representatives of the City Council and the Postal Board to discuss our objections to the proposed speculative redevelopment of the Victoria Square Post Office site. The City leader, Councillor Bosworth, refused to consider revoking planning consent, and left it up to the Postal Board to make any concessions. But in spite of our combined arguments

about Birmingham's heritage, about planning for people instead of profits, and about huge over-provision of office space in Birmingham, the Postal Board remained totally fixed in its determination to demolish the G.P.O. and build the offices

Crucial stage

So after nearly a year's campaigning we have reached a crucial stage. In spite of the massive support we have received from all sections of the community, including support from a great many Trade Union branches in the Birmingham area, and the Birmingham Trades Council, it looks as if the Postal Board will try to go ahead with its disastrous plans. WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT MORE THAN EVER. We



must put the utmost pressure on the City Council and the Postal Board. We must prepare for whatever action is necessary next to save the Post Office. The GBAC has put forward suggestions for retaining the whole building (which is in good condition) and converting it into a leisure centre, since Birmingham is so badly off for such facilities.

Get our report

We have written an account of the way in which trade unionists and conservationists are working together to combat the speculative development plan for the Post Office. Copies of this and our latest broadsheet (price 5p) can be obtained from:- GBAC, 77 School Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28.

THE THREAT TO TENANTS & Campaign Against

In March 1976, the Law Commission published their "Conspiracy and Criminal Law Reform" Bill. Section 2 of this Bill proposes to create five new crimes involving trespass. These proposals amount to a serious legal attack on direct action, however peaceful — whether it involves the occupation of a workplace in defence of jobs, of public buildings or colleges as a protest tactic, or the squatting of empty and unused houses by the homeless.

These offences would give the police the right to intervene in any occupation without a warrant, and anyone taking part would face arrest and imprisonment for up to two years.

This plan to make trespass a crime — it's been a civil matter for over 600 years — came originally from the Tory Party in 1972, who were bent on extending the law to suppress the militant resistance of the labour movement to their policies.

LABOUR PUSHES AHEAD!

The position now is that the Criminal Trespass proposals are part of the Criminal Law Bill (consisting of 3 parts — Part 1 on Conspiracy, Part 2 on Criminal Trespass as in the Law Commission Report, and Part 3 on the provisions for restricting right to jury trial) which was introduced into the House of Lords on December 1st 1976 and given its second reading in the Lords on December 14th. Introducing the second reading for the Government, Lord Harris (Minister of State, Home Office) said that the Government were not committed to the view that "adverse occupation of residential premises" should be as narrow as it is in the Bill. He said they wanted "views" on whether or not it should be extended to all squatting. So the Government are openly inviting Tory amendments to a Bill initiated by the Tories, drafted by the Law Commission, yet the Labour Party have never been consulted on it. The committee stage in the Lords starts on January 20th and it will later go to the House of Commons, probably in late February or early March.

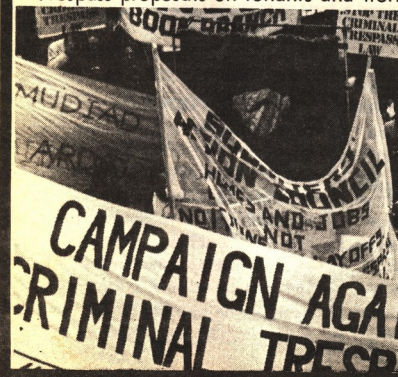
MYTHS BEHIND THE BILL

The media has played an important role in preparing the ground for the introduction of this repressive Bill. Not only has the Bill been falsely presented as being aimed exclusively at squatters, but at the same time a hysterical campaign has convinced many people that they will inevitably return from holiday to find their home invaded — and will be unable to do anything about it.

In reality, such cases have occurred rarely, if at all, as even the Home Office admits (written Parliamentary Answer, June 21st 1976). If they do happen, existing criminal law contains more than enough sanctions to ensure the arrest and immediate eviction of the occupiers.

CACTL does not of course support "squatting" of this kind — but we are utterly opposed to the unscrupulous exploitation of such incidents to appease the property lobby and scapegoat the mass of homeless people who have squatted in empty and unused property.

These stories are being used to create a smokescreen to obscure the real effects of the Criminal Trespass proposals on tenants and workers.



It's important to remember the context in which the Law Commission were considering Criminal Trespass. The year they were briefed, 1972, saw a massive and effective upsurge of direct action, which successfully turned the economic strategy of the Tory government on its head. In the wake of UCS and Fisher Bendix, a wave of occupations achieved considerable success in stopping redundancies. The Manchester engineering sit-ins of spring 1972 marked a new, and to the employers, threatening stage — more than 35 engineering works in the Manchester region were occupied for more than six weeks as a collective bargaining tactic. The miners' strike earlier in the year had seen the effective employment of mass picketing, notably at Saltley, and was to prompt Tory back benchers to call for the law to place tight limits on the numbers of pickets.

Later in the year, the dock strike and the building workers' strike again involved the use of strong mass pickets. At the same time, there was an explosive growth of militant unofficial squatting, especially in London, as the original Family Squatting Associations proved to be inadequate to house the ever-growing numbers of homeless.

The successful use of direct action in both industry and the community in this period, threatening the ability of industrial management and property speculator alike to dispose of their assets as they pleased, provided the background and ideological climate in which the Law Commission were prompted to produce proposals 'to ensure that persons should not with impunity be able to prevent those entitled to property from using it' (Working Paper 54, para 34).

RECT ACTION BY WORKERS

riminal Trespass Law

YOU COULD BE ARRESTED FOR TAKING PART IN AN OCCUPATION OF A FACTORY, TOWN HALL, RENT OFFICE, SOCIAL SECURITY OFFICE, COLLEGE

IF At the beginning of the occupation the management, security guards or caretakers claim that you 'threatened them with violence' - if you outnumber them, that alone can constitute a 'threat of violence' under law (this was one of the prosecutions main arguments in the Shrewsbury Pickets trial).

OFFENCE: "Violence for securing entry" SENTENCE: up to 2 years in prison.

IF The management, caretakers etc claim that you intended to use your placard, banners or the tools which you used to get into the building as 'offensive weapons'.

OFFENCE: "Trespassing with an offensive weapon" SENTENCE: up to 2 years in prison.

IF The management or authorities take out an eviction order against your occupation or work-in, and you 'obstruct' or 'resist' the court officers carrying out the eviction in any way, however peacefully.

OFFENCE: "Obstruction of court officers executing possession orders 113 and 26.

SENTENCE: up to 6 months in prison and/or £400 fine.

IN ALL THESE CASES THE UNSUPPORTED ALLEGATIONS OF THE MANAGEMENT, CARETAKER ETC. ARE ENOUGH TO BRING DOWN IMMEDIATE POLICE INTERVENTION AND ARRESTS AND POSSIBLE ENDING OF THE OCCUPATION.

Occupations that start inside the workplace and don't involve entry from outside would still be affected. Workers only have a licence 'for the purposes of working for their employer'. That doesn't include taking over the workplace, or entry into other parts of it (eg. administration section)

OCCUPATIONS OF EMPTY HOUSES

IF The property owner, by putting a few sticks of furniture in his/her empty property and claiming to sleep there once in a while, pretended that the house was used.

OFFENCE: "Adverse occupation of residential property"

SENTENCE: up to 6 months in prison and/or £400 fine.

IF You have tools on you for getting into or doing up an empty house, like a screwdriver, or you have a kitchen knife in your kitchen.

OFFENCE: "Trespassing with an offensive weapon" SENTENCE: up to 2 years in prison.

IF You resist even passively an eviction by court officers. Licencees, for instance people living in tied accommodation, are open to this charge also.

OFFENCE: "Obstruction of court officers executing possession orders 113 and 26"

SENTENCE: up to 6 months in prison and/or £400 fine.

POLICE INTERVENTION AT ANY OCCUPATION

In every offence, the police are given the power of arrest without warrant. So they could enter any occupation, without a warrant, on the word of any employer's, landlord's, council's or college's stooge that an offence has been committed.

VIOLENT EVICTIONS

The Bill specifically ALLOWS "displaced residential occupiers" to take "ANY ACTION" - INCLUDING VIOLENCE - to evict 'unlawful occupiers'. What is a "displaced residential occupier"?

The definition is so loose that a property-owner, by claiming to have been using a house, will be allowed to use violence to evict, without a court order, anyone who cannot prove their right to be there.

EVICCTIONS WHEN PEOPLE ARE AWAY FROM HOME

The repeal of the 1381 status of forcible entry and the introduction of Criminal Trespass are a Charter for the 'back-door' eviction of 'squatters' when they are out at work. 'Squatters', which include 'illegal' subtenants and licenced occupants (eg. living-in workers or students) who had been told to leave, could have their homes broken into and be locked-out by the landlord when they were out of the house. They could not regain entry without committing criminal damage to the landlord's property.

WHAT IT MEANS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

The Criminal Trespass proposals, if they become law, will have a drastic effect on tenants and workers taking direct action in fighting for jobs and maintaining and improving their living conditions. The occupation of a rent office, social security office, town hall, housing department etc is often the only effective tactic for getting, or at least building wider support for, better facilities on estates, fighting rent increases, getting the DHSS to pay claimants adequate benefits, getting homeless families rehoused etc. Implementation of these proposals will mean that these demonstrations/occupations could be disrupted and broken up as soon as they had started. Tenants on rent strike will also be affected. If Notices to Quit are issued by the council (or by a housing association) then when these notices expire tenants would become trespassers and would therefore come within the scope of this Bill. Residents who decided to take over vacant land or empty buildings for a play space, advice centre etc. are also threatened by this Bill.

Tenants and residents will find the action they can take further and further curtailed - and at a time of massive rent increases, deteriorating housing conditions, increasing homelessness, cuts in services and increasing unemployment.

THE THIN END OF THE WEDGE

This Bill is vicious and repressive. It would give property-owners for the first time a statutory right to violently evict. It would give bailiffs the power of arrest - bailiffs are often a property-owners employees, licenced to carry out a specific eviction, and have a vested interest in it. People wrongly evicted under this Bill could do nothing about it until after the event, if at all.

THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO MAKE TRESPASS IN SOME SITUATIONS A CRIME. ONCE THE PRINCIPLE THAT TRESPASS CAN BE A CRIME IS ACCEPTED, THIS OR ANY FUTURE GOVERNMENT CAN EXTEND IT TO COVER MORE AND MORE SITUATIONS. THE SPEEDED-UP EVICTION ORDERS INTRODUCED IN 1970 AS ANTI-SQUATTING MEASURES HAVE ALREADY BEEN USED AGAINST OCCUPATIONS BY WORKERS (eg. Crosfields Engineering 1975, Briant Colour Processing 1973, Strachans, Hampshire, 1974) AND BY STUDENTS (eg. Warwick University 1975). THIS NEW BILL IS THE THIN END OF THE WEDGE.

TOTAL OPPOSITION

CACTL believes that there can be no compromise on the Bill. It introduces the repressive principle that trespass can be made a crime: once any Criminal Trespass Law was passed, it could easily be extended to cover more and more actions - by this Government, or a future Tory Government.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Support the National Demonstration in London on February 19th and the local events and demonstrations around the country leading up to it.
2. Discuss the Criminal Trespass proposals in your tenants and residents group, trade union, cuts campaign, claimants union etc. Pass a motion opposing it and affiliate to CACTL (£5 fee).
3. Campaign at local level; send copies of your motion to local MP's, Trades Councils etc. as well as to CACTL. Work with your local CACTL group; organise a public meeting in your area.
4. Support us financially, through affiliations and donations, to fund printing, mailings etc.
5. Make 'No to any Criminal Trespass laws' a demand in any direct action you take.
6. CACTL can provide leaflets, posters, speakers and films (involve hire charge) for meetings. Also available late January, a detailed pamphlet giving full information on the Bill and all its implications. Orders and donations to London CACTL.

LIST OF CACTL ADDRESSES ON PAGE 38



7:84 (ENGLAND) IN A SCENE FROM 'LAY OFF' BY JOHN MCGRATH

"Many groups are discovering the use of theatre and plays as part of their campaign. Here we show how YOU can do it."

'Propaganda has become a dirty word, but no other single word can be used to describe the activity of trying to convince other people of the truth of what you believe to be right....Propaganda - explaining what you're doing and why - is an essential activity for all community action groups.'

That was written in Action Notes 6, "The Propaganda Battle", last summer. A few ideas were put forward then about - 'Doing it Your Own Way' - ideas which mean that YOU can control the message, ideas which mean that you can say what you believe to be right.

Theatre, drama, plays, AgitProp, whatever you want to call it, is one of those ways in which you can control the message. More and more activists in the workplace and in the community are using it, both by doing it themselves or by booking one of the full-time groups which tour estates, unions and schools.

Hopefully these Notes will help people who aren't too sure what doing, or booking, a play involves.

THEATRE CAN BE ...

Exciting, entertaining, musical, provocative, stimulating, informative and argue a serious message.

PLAYS who are they written for?

All plays put over a message. Most plays, however, are written and performed for a small intellectual elite and only they seem to be able to understand the message. That small intellectual elite are supported financially to an incredible extent; e.g. the Royal Shakespeare Company made a 'mistake' this year and spent £300,000 too much - but the 30 odd union and community based groups hardly get this sum in one year!

Then of course there are all the plays like 'No Sex Please We're British' and 'Fiona Richmond Reveals All!' which are the equivalents of 'Confessions of a Window Cleaner' type films. They are cheap, low-quality and basically mindless - aimed at making a quick profit and nothing else.

Establishment theatre, which takes over 90% of the cash, just does not write for a working-class au-

dience. In other words Theatre is not exempt from the class society! Sure there are attempts to increase audiences but they still churn out the same irrelevant and intellectual plays. They certainly aren't about to admit that their plays are irrelevant - they would then have to produce 'relevant' plays and then they would start getting into a few problems like - politics.

As we said, 'all plays have a message', and to 'succeed' in theatre you basically have to obscure, dress-up and disguise your message until, for most people, it is meaningless.

However, it needn't be like that! Plays can put over the message YOU want them to, and plays can talk about other things than sex, gossip and romantic problems. There is a growing number of professional groups who work outside the Established theatre and there are many totally untrained people involved in Campaigns who have used theatre and realised its potential. All these people are basically trying to write and produce plays for tenants, trade unionists and specific campaigns. In other words, they are developing a propaganda technique - 'explaining what they believe in and trying to convince others' - by using theatre.

PLAYS CAN ...

- * Be part of a Public Meeting
- * Take place on the streets (Street Theatre)
- * Be part of a Social
- * Be performed in your local Pub
- * Be a regular event in your community centre or local hall
- * Be performed on Playschemes and for OAPs

WHO WRITES & PERFORMS

Firstly, YOU can. Here's an example.....

Longsight, Manchester.....no centre for community activities.....a Council public hall lies mostly unused.....too expensive.....campaign starts to get it under tenants' control.....week long festival as part of the Campaign.....tenants in Campaign decide to use street theatre to explain their case to the tenants on the estate.....there were three meetings of the Street Theatre group:

1 The group decided their message - 'We want the Public Hall under tenants' control - Stop the bulldozers!'

2 What 'scenes' could they use to explain their arguments? How could they do this in a humorous way? Ideas: (a) Council man with sledgehammer wanting to knock the hall (cardboard model) down - "After all, nobody uses it!" (b) Clash with tired mother and young people with naught to do. (c) A tour (in mime) around the advantages of the hall. (d) Stopping the bulldozer! (e) Victory song.



3 The rehearsal.

The end-product lasted 10 minutes and was done on the back of an articulated lorry. Along with accordion, guitar and drum, the play was done six times in the procession at the beginning of the Festival. The response it got:

- * More people came out to see the procession
- * When people realised it was local people 'acting' they paid more attention
- * The message of the Campaign came over loud and clear.

Longsight isn't the only group to use theatre - Cromwell St. in Nottingham has just done a Pantomime with the help of people from the Nottingham Playhouse (see p. 5). Students have also used street theatre extensively, e.g. Cardiff, Exeter and Edinburgh have all done plays on Education Cuts.

The Longsight play was also helped on its way (like Cromwell St.) by people with some experience, and so on to another source of plays..... a Theatre group could do a play for you. There is a wide variety of groups doing a wide variety of plays.

What sort of plays?

It will probably be helpful to define a few 'types' so that you can choose which would be the most useful for your situation:

Street Theatre: Short, sharp, and flexible. Ideal for shopping precincts etc., also at pickets of the Town Hall and demonstrations. Good street theatre creates a far more lively atmosphere than a few slogans and placards. A good starting point for those people who want to do some theatre but don't have any experience, e.g. Longsight.

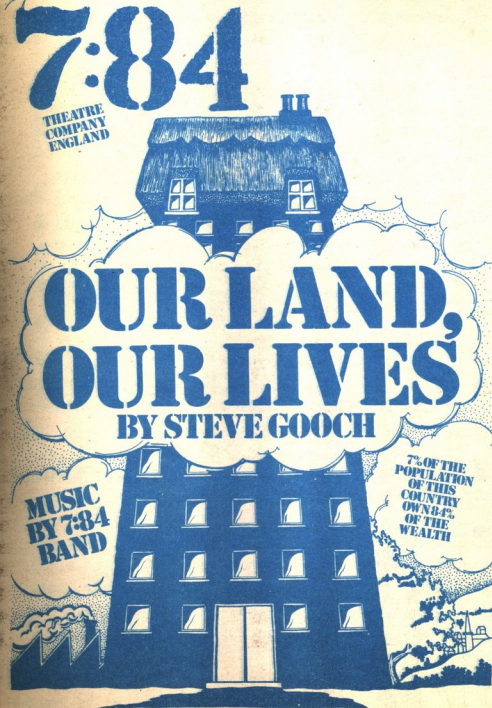
Kids Theatre: Lots of groups doing both straight plays and participation pieces with kids - both inside and outside. Within schools this is called 'Theatre-in-Education' (TIE), many large Theatres have TIE teams, though they are being threatened with cutbacks. Tremendous variety of subjects - political content is difficult to introduce because of accusations of 'indoctrinating' children.

For Festivals: All kinds of groups, with all kinds of content! Slapstique, clowning, strolling musicians, escapologists, the bizarre, the unusual and the plain stupid! Be careful when choosing entertainment for festivals - some acts can be more alienating than entertaining!

Music: There are a few groups now offering music with a bit more comment than 'Yeh, yah, yeh' or 'OOoh I luv yer babe, yeh'! This includes people doing Rock, Folk and Cabaret type acts with political content. Great for Socials.

AgitProp: A very distinct style which involves people representing things, like 'Capital' or 'The Council', rather than normal characters. It tends to be very fast and provocative with direct political statements and striking images. Most AgitProp plays are designed to fit into a Public Meeting as part of a Campaign.

Socialist Theatre: Some groups use techniques very close to Established Theatre and still work in big Theatres as well as smaller venues. These tend to be full-length plays (using characters)



which aren't necessarily connected to a current campaign. Definitely worth getting along for an evening of entertainment packed with ideas.

It is beyond the scope of this article to give a breakdown of the names and addresses of all the groups since it would run into many pages BUT CounterAct (see end) will be bringing out a pamphlet soon with all this information in it.

There is another important distinction:-

Local groups: Many groups restrict themselves to a geographical area. You could expect these groups to be more in touch with local issues - perhaps producing specific plays on them. They should also be open to suggestions for new plays and could well do a play 'made to order' for a local community group or union branch.

National Touring groups: These tour all over Great Britain and will obviously concentrate on the general situation. Most groups are not aligned to any one party and concentrate on putting over broad Socialist ideas, which provides the all-important link between local action and the wider struggle.

What are the plays about ?

<u>Broadside</u>	'Danger - Women at Work' - about the Equal Pay and the Sex Discrimination Acts.
<u>CAST</u>	'Cutting us to Shreds' (on the cuts)
<u>CounterAct</u>	'The Cuts Show' and 'Short Shrift on the Double Shift' (about nurseries and the cuts)
<u>Red Ladder</u>	'Anybody Sweating?' - a cabaret on a whole load of issues
<u>7:84</u>	'Law and Order' (see advert.)
<u>Kartoon Klowns</u>	A Rock band
<u>Monstrous Regiment</u>	'SCUM' - on the Paris Commune
<u>Puppet Tree</u>	'Don't Spare the Horses' (for kids)
<u>Mayday</u>	'All the Councillors Men' (a play about corruption in the Council)

How do these plays get written ?

Most people when they decide to do a play for tenants or unions follow a well-worn path:

1 Decide on a Campaign or issue that needs a play. Much discussion is needed here as well as involvement in campaigns themselves, otherwise you'll end up with a play which won't be seen as relevant and doesn't tally with people's experiences.

2 Once decided on an issue it is then important (whatever kind of theatre you are doing) to talk to the people involved on a day-to-day basis, so

that you get to know the pitfalls, the strong points, and the sort of people involved.

3 Research - on top of talking to people you have to know the context in which the Campaign is set, i.e. if you want to do a play on Council housing it is also important to know the role of the Banks in the economy and interest payments. Always research more than you need for the actual play so that you can bring up more material if necessary in a discussion afterwards.

4 All this then has to be dramatised - the most difficult task! There are a number of different methods which are too lengthy to go into now, but rest assured every group have their own individual ways. If the work of one group specifically interests you, approach them yourselves and if there are a number of you they may do a Workshop.

5 Fixing a tour - where should it be performed? Just as much work should go into getting the play performed to the right people. When watching a play it is always important to ask whether or not the right sort of audience is watching. And when writing the play the sort of audience you are aiming at should always be kept firmly in mind - but it is no good writing a successful play and not having the right contacts to book it; indeed it is not successful until you do!

Looking at the above it is only (4) which stops most people doing plays of their own.

(1) - (3) can be easily tackled by people with any

CounterAct presents

THE cuts

Reviewed with Hootley by 10p-15p

Hit!

**Pensioners
Schools
Hospitals
Nurseries.
Welfare**

**AND
Jobs**

THE CUTS SHOW

Music, Songs, Fun..

.....it's Socialist Cabaret !!

It's... Confidence Shakin
Pound Crashin City Bashin H
and Clapin Feet Stompin Sys
tern Stopin.GOOD

COST

WHEN

WHERE

& now the FIGHT BACK



commitment. There are many sources of info. and addresses for research - Community Action, for example! (5) should not be too much problem if you are planning to do it in a localised area. When it comes to (4) stage fright tends to set in! The Longsight group had CounterAct to help them out and to make suggestions, criticisms, etc. The main problem is that people feel that they should come up to West End standards immediately - this is a complete myth.

The myth is that people can't step on stage unless they're as witty as Bruce Forsyth or as smooth as Starsky and Hutch.

The myth is that you should step onto the stage to exhibit yourself - to Ego-trip.

This is the case because most actors and actresses just do not believe in the lines they are saying, BUT the whole point of our theatre is that it is a propaganda technique where people are saying what they believe in and trying to convince others.

The commitment to those beliefs can produce the confidence to step on stage and to give a good performance.

It is still important for people just starting that a basic standard is reached, i.e. people can see and hear you and that you don't look like a corpse. To reach this level, get somebody who knows about such things to show you.

Putting on a play

Not everyone has time to do a play but it doesn't take much to book a play for whatever event you are organising. If you are thinking of doing so there are a number of questions which need to be considered.

1 What do you want the play for? What situation do you expect it to fit into?

2 Find the play which would best suit the occasion - do this by 'phoning or talking to a theatre group and discussing with them whether their play would be suitable and, if not, what play would be.

3 Whichever play you decide to book, give the group plenty of notice - some get booked up months

in advance but don't let this stop you enquiring.

4 Finance - costs vary and the amount you are expected to pay will depend on who you are and how much money you have. The local Arts Association will support performances - but the amount depends very much upon the area of the country you are in. You could roughly expect a group to charge between £30 and £150 but you might not have to pay anything of this. Every group stresses that no matter how little money you have - get in touch, something can be sorted out!

5 Publicity - try everything. Local radio, TV, papers, etc. Most groups provide their own posters where you fill in the details. As with most things, good publicity will make or break.

'WRECKERS'

by DAVID EDGAR is a new show from 7:84 Theatre touring in February and March 1977.

Based in London's Dockland, the show is about LAW AND ORDER and the way both of them affect the working class. It doesn't just concern London - it's about how the law affects every worker, at work or at home; how parliamentary change comes up against economic reality; and how the real crooks are never the ones to end up in any kind of dock.

At a time when the law is increasingly being used against the working class this show should not only bring a relevant message, but also provide excellent entertainment complete with music, songs and comedy.

The show will be touring in the following areas -
February: East Anglia, Cumbria, Sunderland, Gateshead.
March: West Midlands, Oldham, Manchester Area, Nelson & Colne Area, Merseyside.

Full details and up-to-date touring schedule from Alan Tweedie, 7:84 Theatre Co., Unit 407, 31 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R OAT.

6 Take careful note of the technical requirements. Many plays need at least one plug and, of course, a stage area. Also try and estimate the audience size, i.e. if you expect between 40 and 100 don't book a hall for 200 - it's better to cram 'em in. For many people it will be a luxury to have a choice of halls; never mind, theatre groups are very used to coping!

7 Few plays stand up on their own - have a speaker with it or, if it is a social, a raffle and a disco. Plays linked to a Campaign very often have a discussion after them so people can

say what they think about the points raised in the play.

8 If this is the first time that you are putting a play on and if it is in an area where nothing of its like has been seen before - don't be disillusioned by a small audience. If the people who do turn up enjoy it, the word will get around and the next time the audience will be larger. For the first event it is wise to include theatre as part of a public meeting which you know will have a good attendance.

Would a Theatre group produce a play for you?

There is no straight answer to this. The best course of action is to put your ideas straight to a group and see what they think of them. They may take them up or hand you on to another group. Sort out in your own mind:

1 Should you approach a local or a national group?

2 Have you allowed enough time? Researching, writing and rehearsing is a lengthy process.

3 Are you prepared and do you have enough time to help out on the research side?

4 What sort of bookings are you going to get and are there enough to justify all the work a play involves?

5 What kind of audience are you aiming at and do you have the right contacts?

6 Is it at all possible for you to get your own group together and ask a full-time group to do some Workshops?

Getting in touch

As I have said before it is impossible to list all the groups and their necessary details.

Instead, CounterAct is going to publish a Directory of useful addresses, including all sorts of groups, Arts Associations, and some new ideas. It will be out at the end of February and will cost about 20p. Write to:

CounterAct (see address below).

In the meantime here are a few groups; most keep a contact list for all other groups:

CounterAct	7:84
27 Clerkenwell Close	31 Clerkenwell Close
London EC1R OAT	London EC1R OAT
01- 251 4978	01-251 1151

CAST	Red Ladder
11c Cabbell Street	20 Westminster Buildings
London NW 1	New York Street
01-402 6087	Leeds
	0532 456342

INVESTIGATION OF THE HOUSING LOBBY

Part
4

'INSIDE THE CIVIL SERVICE'

What's beneath the bowler hats?

TO MANY PEOPLE the Civil Service is a massive bureaucracy. Civil servants are the "bowler hat brigade," pushing paper between tea breaks. They are believed to serve the public and politicians more or less "impartially".

Yet these images tell us nothing about the real power and structure of the Civil Service. Nor do they say anything about the way housing policy is drawn up and carried out in a giant government department like the Department of the Environment.

In reality the Civil Service is a close-knit, hierarchical organisation. At the top is the "controlling elite," the "administrative grade," with strong ideas of its own on every housing policy.

But how much influence do civil servants have over politicians? How susceptible are they to outside pressures from the builders and professional interests in the "housing lobby," which we have looked at in previous issues of this magazine? Just how "impartial" are they?



"Oh THAT? I won it at Civil Service College for being top of the class together with 24 others".

To try to answer these questions we look at:-

- the "administrative elite" - their class background and the influence of their essentially middle class values on housing policy.
- how the Department of the Environment is organised - the orders of command.
- how the "departmental view" on housing policies is reached.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE 'ELITE'

The Civil Service is divided into 3 main "classes":

1. Administrative grades - the elite.
2. Executive grades - from middle managers down to junior officers - they carry out instructions.
3. Clerical grades - many low paid office jobs, with no influence on departmental policy making.

The administrative grades occupy all the senior decision-taking positions within the Department. In addition to these 3 classes - administrative, executive, clerical - the Department employs large numbers of "specialists" and "professionals" - such as architects, planners, surveyors and solicitors. They work in the upper reaches of the Department and advise and support the administrative and upper executives.

Who are the elite?

They are largely drawn from middle and upper class backgrounds:

60-70% of the administrative grade went to Oxford or Cambridge; over 80% are from middle or upper middle class backgrounds as defined by father's occupation; one fifth had fathers in the Civil Service; about 60% attended private school; about 95% are male.

Most of the administrative class are property owners, a factor which can't be ignored when looking at a department dealing with housing policy. Their sympathies lie with property ownership and landlordism, and it is often hard for them to swallow policies which "mess around" with property rights, such as municipalisation or security of tenure.

Many of their values are reinforced by the papers they read - 88% take the Times, 72% the Daily Telegraph and 68% the right-wing journal "The Economist".

Oxford and Cambridge crews

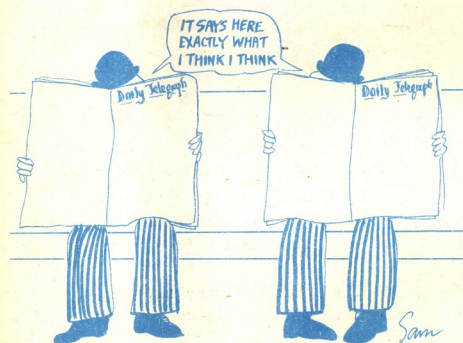
Despite the major reorganisation of the Civil Service proposed in 1967 following the Fulton Report, there is little evidence that the make-up of the administrative grades has altered since then.

There are two ways of becoming a member of that elite:

▼ selection through an examination system - for which Oxford and Cambridge provide 60-70% of the successful candidates.

▲ through promotion from the lower executive ranks which is difficult to achieve.

This 'class solidarity' amongst the elite means that they have a shared outlook and common values. They are able to maintain this through the system of selection of new recruits.



HOW

THE DEPARTMENT of the ENVIRONMENT IS ORGANISED

● Political order of command

Until recently, the DoE was divided into four Ministries, each with its own Minister of State, who were responsible to the Secretary of State for the Environment (Peter Shore). The four Ministers had responsibility for Housing and Construction; Planning and Local Government; Transport; and Recreation and Leisure.

Last year, Transport became a separate Ministry outside the DoE. Housing, Construction, Planning and Local Government were brought together under one Minister - Reg Freeson. The Minister for Recreation, Denis Howell, was also given more responsibility, such as for Water.

The responsibility for housing policy is therefore shared by Peter Shore and Reg Freeson, with a number of other MPs called Parliamentary Under-Secretaries appointed to help them out - Ernest Armstrong, MP; Kenneth Marks, MP; Guy Barnett, MP; and the Baroness Birk (!) from the House of Lords.

● Administrative order of command

★ Permanent Secretary - the Senior Civil Servant for the whole of the DoE, in charge of all its work. The DoE is unusual in that it also has a 'Second Permanent Secretary' who oversees the work of all the Housing and Planning 'commands'.

★ Deputy Permanent Secretaries - nicknamed "admirals". Deputy Secretaries are responsible for a 'command' or group of Directorates.

★ Under Secretaries - nicknamed "captains" are in charge of a Directorate (or "ship").

★ Assistant Secretaries - in charge of a 'Division' within a Directorate.

★ Principals - in charge of a 'Branch' within a Division.

The key Directorates

As far as housing policy is concerned, there are 8 key directorates under the Second Permanent Secretary - Housing A, Housing B, Housing C, Housing D, the Inner Cities Directorate, the New Towns Directorate and the two Directorates in charge of the Construction Industry.

Each of these 8 Directorates is made up of Divisions, run by Assistant Secretaries. Space does not allow us to show the full detail of work carried out in each Division. But, for example, Housing A deals with Building Societies, Housing B with Homelessness and empty property, amongst many other things. Housing C covers council housing cost yardsticks. Housing D covers council housing management.

A number of observations should be made about this structure of the DoE:-

★ The Under-Secretary is usually the key figure in policy making. This is because as 'captains' they control whole 'ships' (or Directorates), and it gives them the chance to become "expert" on the policies they are in charge of. It is rare for anyone below Under-Secretary to have access to the Minister.



★ Regional Offices: There is a regional office of the DoE in each of the regions except London and the South-East, which is dealt with centrally. These regional offices are responsible for carrying out Central Policy, and are run by a 'Housing Controller'. Most of the contact with local authorities is through the regional office.

★ The Inner City Directorate has only recently been established to service the Cabinet sub-committee, chaired by Peter Shore, which is looking at the whole problem of Inner Cities. This Directorate cuts across the work of other Directorates and even across other departments. Some functions of the Home Office Urban Deprivation Unit have been transferred to this Directorate - for example handling Comprehensive Community Projects.

★ Personal Policy Advisor: There is also a policy advisor to the Secretary of State, Peter Shore, appointed by him. The advisor's job is like that of a "food-taster," reading and commenting on documents from the Civil Service before they reach Shore, and generally trying to be his eyes and ears in an enormous bureaucracy with a strong will of its own.

THE 'DEPARTMENTAL VIEW'

ON EVERY MAJOR and minor housing policy there is always a "departmental view" within the Department of the Environment. This is the collective wisdom of the civil servants working on a policy, and it is built up from different directions:-

1. Outside pressures

The DoE is subject to a barrage of pressure from outside interests - the builders, building societies, Tory and Labour MPs, councils, professional institutes, the "poverty lobby" and community action groups. Many of the housing "Divisions" within the DoE have regular links with what they call their 'client groups'.

For example:

- ★ the National Federation of Building Trades Employers and the National Housebuilding Council have close links with the Construction Industry Directorate
- ★ The Building Societies with the Mortgage Finance Division
- ★ Shelter has close ties with the Homelessness Division.

As we have shown in our investigation of the

INVESTIGATION INTO
the 'HOUSING LOBBY'
Part 1 Building Societies &
Contractors. No. 26
Part 2 The Professionals'
No. 27
Part 3 'The Spiders Web'
No. 28
Part 4 'Inside the Civil
Service'. No. 29

"housing lobby," the business and construction interests are highly organised. They can command wide publicity for their reports and campaigns. Inevitably, these pressures influence the thinking of the civil servants. They will understand their point of view and tend to represent it internally.

So the DoE is a "coalition" of interests. Yet few of these interests reflect the real demands and aspirations of the working class.

"They want people to play along, they want to preserve 'goodwill' even if it means chopping legislation to bits"

2. Class values

A high proportion of the administrative grades are home owners, with sympathies for other peoples' property. The DoE receives a large weekly mailbag of hard luck letters from landlords, which reinforce the civil servants' sympathy for landlords as a class. So in major areas of policy like improvement grants, mortgage lending, security for tenants, these sympathies influence the balance of legislation in favour of property rights and against tenants' rights.

3. 'Managers'

Senior civil servants are trained as 'managers'. In housing as in any other field they are expected to see problems as having administrative solutions, rather than as issues of ownership and control.

On the Community Land Act, for instance, they would say, "You believe in land nationalisation, but let's look at the practical side. How will it work...." Many radical ideas for Housing Action Areas, under the 1974 Housing Act, were lost as the DoE officials put up a series of legal and administrative objections to them. Even a committed Minister is in a very weak position to overcome such obstacles.

"Civil Servants are trained as managers...to see problems as having administrative solutions rather than as issues of public ownership and control"

On their career paths they will be expected to move readily between departments. One day they may be dealing with direct labour departments, the next with national energy policy.

4. Adding 'expert' advice

Although decision-taking is controlled by the administrators, they receive a great deal of advice from experts employed to work in each Division on a whole range of policies. The experts include architects, surveyors, planners, account-

ants and lawyers. They are important in building up the "departmental view" on policy, and in carrying out research exercises. The experts are also members of their own professional institutes. We have shown the sort of right wing housing policies that these institutes provide - see Community Action No. 27.



The DoE regularly assesses the effect (or lack of effect) of its housing policies. Occasionally, major internal reviews of policy take place. The 3 major Reviews now underway are:

- ★ Housing Policy Review. The biggest review in recent times, due to report 'early in the new year'
- ★ Rent Act Review. The government is worried about the over-rapid decline of the private landlord, and is looking again at rent controls and security.
- ★ Direct Labour Organisations. Looking at ways of expanding council-run DLO's especially for new housing construction.

5. The Treasury

The importance of the Treasury - especially at the moment with the cuts - should not be underestimated. They will see and comment on policy documents, take part in inter-departmental working parties and generally hold the financial strings on policy. Treasury policy is often dressed up and presented to the outside world as 'housing policy'. Take the cuts, for instance, in which the Treasury sets limits on the amount of money that Peter Shore can spend on housing construction and other key expenditure.

The Treasury strongly influences the level of Rate Support Grant and the imposition of "Cash Limits" on councils.

The Treasury is also the highest status department in the Civil Service, and promotion in other departments is often tied to the Treasury's opinion. Indeed, Richard Crossman in his Diaries reports rows with his civil servants in the Ministry of Housing in the 1960s because they were 'spies,' reporting everything back to the Treasury and taking their orders from there.

SO THE "DEPARTMENTAL VIEW" EMERGES from these differing pressures - a mixture of outside influence, expert advice, Treasury constraints and their own managerial and social values.

Pragmatic

Yet this view is far from static. The Civil Service is highly pragmatic and capable of adapting rapidly to even massive outside changes like a new Government.

Three years ago, during Labour's push for "social ownership," the DoE had to implement the 1974 Rent Act and council municipalisation policies in a drive against private landlords. Now it has painlessly turned its mind to bringing back private landlords, with the Rent Act review, ideas for licensing empty property from landlords, etc. This is DoE pragmatism at its best.

Also they do not want to alienate or upset important interests - and be criticised publicly as a result. They do want people to play along, they want to preserve "goodwill," especially of the business community, even if it means chopping legislation to bits to gain the "compliance" of others for their policies.



"Fawlt Towers" - the DoE headquarters

'I'm sorry, Minister, but...'

EVERY NEW POLICY must work its way through the Civil Service machine, a machine which takes out the 'radical' part of even the mildest legislation. "How will it work, Minister?" they will ask. "This will offend the builders". "This won't go down at all well with our local authority chaps, I'm afraid." "I'm sorry, Minister, but the Treasury don't agree. Now what we suggest is this...." "Well, our view, Minister, is...." ●



Flash in the pan?

The first most people heard of Uncle Jo was when the Greenwich Council's CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) hit the headlines in October 1976. For Uncle Jo's tenants it marked another milestone in a long history of battles. The tenants hope that this may be the end of a story which goes back to 1971.

Bargain

The now famous estate in East Greenwich was acquired by Uncle Jo for £33,000 in 1971. The 77 houses had previously been offered to a Conservative Council twice at £25,000 then at £28,000, but both offers were turned down.

Token repairs were made and many empty houses were let out at £14 per week (the registered rents were about £1.50).

First CPO

Shortly afterwards the newly elected Labour Council declared a CPO on the area under Part III of the 1957 Housing Act - on the grounds that the houses were unfit and incapable of being made fit. The first CPO failed, partly because of the poor case presented by the Council and partly because of Uncle Jo's extravagant promises to the Inspector. On the day the Inspector visited the "Order lands" Uncle Jo conjured up a small army of workmen, dashing up and down ladders and playing with paint brushes, who promptly vanished the following day.

Tenants Association formed

As a result of the failure of the compulsory purchase order, the tenants association was formed in October 1973. The association was immediately plunged into a mass of complaints about housing conditions and lack of repairs and it soon became apparent that Uncle Jo wasn't going to let us take things easy.

Rent Battles

Fair rents had been assessed by the Rent Officer but Uncle Jo appealed to the Rent Assessment Committee. 26 tenants were forced to engage the services of a barrister, solicitor and surveyor as Uncle Jo alleged these properties were furnished, despite the Rent Officer's declarations to the contrary. The Rent Assessment Committee confirmed the rent officer's decision, and Uncle Jo's rents were slashed - many by half. All this took over a year of hard work - report writing, committee meetings, meetings with councillors and with the added worry of finance at the back of our minds all the time.

Uncle Jo refuses rent

During the year since the Rent Officer's original assessment - Uncle Jo tried a new ploy - refusal of rent. Naturally, by the time the final decision on the rents was made, the tenants were heavily in arrears. This enabled Uncle Jo to initiate court action for possession. Once again, we needed a solicitor, a barrister, housing advice, more meetings, circulars, visits, etc. With few exception, we succeeded in retaining possession for the tenants. But at what cost in financial and worry terms? You can't go to court for nothing. Meanwhile, other tenants were also fighting to keep their homes against another series of Uncle Jo's allegations. This time he claimed that they were refusing to allow him access to their homes to carry out repairs. This was disproved when they publicly agreed in court to allow him access.

Council limbers up

The Council published a survey of house conditions which highlighted the appalling state of the properties but only suggested "long term redevelopment" as a solution. The TA was obliged to launch another offensive to get the estate reclassified for "immediate redevelopment". This was achieved

by more meetings, publicity, lobbying at the Town Hall and finally the interruption by our members of a Housing Committee meeting where the survey was being discussed. The result:- the Council declared its intention to make a further CPO on 30 April 1975.

At the same time, Uncle Jo's non-fulfillment of his many promises was leading to yet another cause for complaint and eventually "Determination to Purchase" notices were issued by the Council following his non-compliance with Section 16 notices. Uncle Jo even managed to summons the tenants in these cases which were strictly a matter between him and the Council! More worry, meetings, circulars, etc.

Problems

The TA resolved to present its own case at the CPO Inquiry in October 1976. Our case was to be severely hampered by the dwindling number of tenants left on the estate. Some were forced out, other fled only too willingly - many would have been prime witnesses. So we made a film.

Film and Inquiry

This took 3 months, much hard work, late nights and weekends, drafting scripts, interviews, filming, editing, research, etc. Little did we know that the Inspector, Dorothy Lane, for whom we had gone to so much trouble would refuse to even watch it! For the Inquiry we also prepared witnesses - this involved a questionnaire on landlord/tenant relations, individual house conditions, desires of residents, etc, interviewing and checking facts. Altogether we prepared about 30 people and took statements; we even got a couple of Uncle Jo's ex-employees on our side!



'WATCHDOG'

The TA regularly kept in touch with its members through Watchdog, our own newspaper. Tenants now know that the only reliable information comes in Watchdog.

The final campaign before the CPO consisted of

WATCHDOG

The Newsletter of the Glenforth & Glenister Estate Tenants Association.
c/o 10 Armitage Rd.



ACTION AT LAST!

The Association had strong support from its members at a recent Council Committee meeting. The object of the exercise was to persuade the Councillors into altering the recommendations of the survey report.

TV SERVICE

FREE ESTIMATES

49 WOOLWICH ROAD,
LONDON, S.E.18

THIS PROVED HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL!

(see page 3)

six weeks intensive work: writing up our evidence, preparing leaflets, making posters, filing press cuttings, writing press releases and letters, committee meetings and general meetings, house calls, sticking up posters, talking to the press and dispelling rumours.

The latter was and still is a particular problem. Every day new stories catch on - "He's sold out; we've lost; we've been betrayed; he wants more money; etc". It's very hard to sort out the truth from the lies, and usually the press get it wrong.

Fast CPO decision

We are now waiting for the Department of the Environment to make a decision on the Compulsory Purchase Order. Normally this takes at least nine months to a year. But, because of the tremendous publicity, the DoE is expected to decide in January. Quick action on a CPO is virtually unheard of.

Whitter owns 77 houses in the CPO area. About half are now empty. He paid £33,000 for the lot, using finance from Lloyds, Midland and National Westminster Banks. He is asking the council £500,000. Whitter can only profit out of his activities even if the CPO is confirmed.

So you see, our campaign was by no means a flash in the pan, but continued hard work, maintained only by the hope that one day we would be free of Uncle Jo.

Contact Stella Nickolay, Secretary, Glenforth and Glenister Estate Tenants Association,
c/o 1 Collierston Rd., London SE10. 01-858 1587.

fighting FOR



UNDER-FIVES

The whole history of provision for children under five has been one of small-scale voluntary provision filling in some parts of the huge gap left by meagre state provision. The two issues have been the need for play and education for kids (which has always had some success because it's been a middle class lobby) and the need for full-time care for all kids whose parents want or need to work (and this lobby has got nowhere). It is estimated that 300,000 children are looked after by illegal child minders - one of the solutions resorted to by working parents. For an idea of the scale of the problem ...

- there are 2,000,000 under-5s
- there are day nursery places for only 20,000.

A shameful record

Local authorities have had permissive powers to set up nursery provision since 1918. They have achieved the grand total of full- or part-time places for 10% of under-5s (not including rising 5s). Even counting playgroups, only 19% of all under 5s had any provision in 1971 and these constituted

- 27% of the children of non-manual workers
- 14% of the children of manual workers.

There were 80,000 day nursery places in 1949, when

women were vital to war work. By the 50s, although women were becoming an even larger proportion of the workforce, the number of places was cut by half. The number of places obviously doesn't depend on the needs of women but on the need for women. In post-war industry women are used in part-time, low-paid work and haven't been politically organised enough to demand what they need.

Governments have regularly stated their intention to make provisions - '44, '68, '72, '74, and have constantly followed this with a freeze on any expansion. The TUC has passed resolutions since 1947 calling for nurseries - but it's never been a priority despite the number of women workers.

Councils cut full-time places

There was a big freeze on expansion in the nursery sector from 1960-68 - at a time when there were $\frac{1}{2}$ million mothers of under-5s at work. However, there was pressure from the middle classes for play and education for kids. The voluntary playgroup movement started up, grew phenomenally and local authorities seized the opportunity to be seen to be doing something - and switched more day nursery places and more full-time places over to

part-time nursery classes. This was further encouraged in DES Circular 2/73.

The solution for working parents still had to be an individual one - if you need to work and are unorganised you are vulnerable and have to take what's offered.

Pressure has been growing from the women's movement, and through trade unions, tenants' associations, things like the Working Women's Charter campaign, demands for provision for all kids are becoming integral to demands for women's equality.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

New estates with high rise flats and old declining areas often have no play-space and no community facilities for parents at home all day with kids. Isolation and boredom are difficult to imagine for those people who do get out. Now the problem is being tackled by tenants' associations and groups of parents. There are easy informal things to do - Mothers and Toddlers Groups, meeting groups, one-o'clock clubs. These are projects which involve small amounts of money.

Community action on local issues - groups of parents, teachers, supporters of under-5 provision fighting for grants and premises to set up their own type of under-5 facilities - has led to some exciting community projects.

At the same time, both the scale of the need and the political demand for full state responsibility for providing child-care - for both the women and the kids - mean that voluntary projects aren't the answer.

We want to look at the different sorts of approach to the demand for facilities for under-5s in one particular area - Hackney and Islington in London - to see how groups tackle the problem and what issues their project throws up.

Self-help groups

Dalston Under-5s

After applying for Urban Aid to set up a Community Day Nursery and being rejected, this group of parents decided to set up a playgroup anyway. They applied to a Housing Trust for a property awaiting rehabilitation and got a house - free. They work a rota of looking after the kids - it means each parent will work one day with the kids and has 4 days free. The kids benefit from playing together, it costs very little to run, and it's very popular. They have an open afternoon every week for any parent at home with kids, too.

Monteith Estate

Tenants in Tower Hamlets set up a Mothers and Toddlers Group, from their tenants' association, be-

Some of the facilities for Under - 5s

Local authorities run:

Day Nurseries. Ideal for working parents - open 8.30-6.30. Take babies, too. Trained nursery nurses. Always long waiting lists and social services families get priority. Totally inadequate supply of places.

Nursery Schools. Take 3-5 year olds.

Teaching. Hours usually 9.30-3.30 - still dodgy for workers.

Nursery Classes. Part-time in the main attached to infant schools.

Community projects and local people run:

Mothers and Toddlers Groups: social get-together once or twice a week for small group.

Playgroups: 2/3 hours a day, differing number of days. Playgroup leaders (trained) look after up to 20 kids. Usually grant-aided by the council.

Extended Playgroups/Community Nurseries: Playgroups running 9.30-3.30.

cause, as they said:

"being on the 16th floor with a baby can be very lonely and depressing".

There were no community facilities at all on the estate, so they run their group in a church hall, raise their own money and have very low costs.

A Craft Workshop

The Hackney Downs Youth Centre

already ran a Mothers and Toddlers Group with a grant from Social Services. They wanted to have a crafts teacher in once a week and applied for funding from an Adult Education Institute. After running for 4 weeks with this grant the money



Dericote Street Playgroup, Hackney.

was stopped - it was claimed the classes weren't attended. The group carried on without pay for staff until the end of term and then looked for a new source of funds. Because they had been a success, had been well attended and stuck it out their original grant was given back at this point.

136 Playgroup in Hackney

This used to run only in the mornings, but the leaders were under pressure to cater for working mothers, (lots of women in Hackney work part-time, which is still too long for a playgroup). They often stayed longer themselves with kids who were waiting for mum to come back from work.

The playleaders decided to open for twice as many hours and pushed for an extra grant to do this. Waiting lists for nursery places are enormous in the area, but they only got money to cover an extra person at lunchtime. They decided to extend anyway, and now the 2 playleaders work half the day for free. They still have kids delivered and picked up by child minders! Working parents still miss out.



They are keeping the pressure on for full funding, as they think the Council is getting away with nursery care on the cheap. (Costs are increased anyway for running all day.)

To avoid the Council treating each group individually, therefore making arbitrary decisions about funding, premises, etc. for community groups, the 136 Group have joined with other groups in the area who have, or want to, extend the number of hours their playgroup is 'open'. They have drawn up 5 campaigning demands:

- 1) They all put in for the same grant.
- 2) Funding must cover four full-time workers.
- 3) Courses should be provided for extended playgroup staff.
- 4) An allocation for permanent equipment should be included.
- 5) Fees should be on the day nursery scale.

They redress if any demand or group is refused is

limited, of course, but they do have an umbrella organisation, the Hackney Under Fives, which can back them, draw support from other under-5 workers, supporters and activists.

Dericote Street Extended Playgroup

This has always run as a full-time nursery (9.30-3.30) but had to fight for support in the first place and prove the need to open all day! They are worried now because it is so much CHEAPER for the Council to fund an extended playgroup (£3,000 p.a.) than a proper nursery (£60,000 to build). It means that nursery nurses' jobs are jeopardised as well as new nursery schemes. Camden closed down one of its nurseries and offered the premises to an extended playgroup.

Dericote Street have been pushing to be able to be allowed to join NALGO and therefore to be able to negotiate for the same rates for full-time playgroup leaders as for nursery nurses, to prevent undercutting them.

They say building up links like this is essential if councils aren't going to build up cheap voluntary provision at everyone's expense.

Nursery Campaigns Islington

Concentrates on fighting for full-time provision for all under-5s and is resisting Council efforts to support 'informal arrangements' now the squeeze is on, i.e. cheap voluntary child-care which doesn't cater for working women.

The group fought against the CLOSURES of 2 nurseries. They had an 80-strong lobby of Social Services and the action, along with resistance by matron and staff of one, saved it and a further fight prevented 10 places being chopped. Lobbying, leafleting, fly-posting and painting backed up a demonstration with NALGO outside the other nursery. This one failed, though, but links have been made between the campaign and nursery workers and unions. They fight for parity of wages, facilities and training in all the different under-5 sectors, and have joined with the Islington Cuts campaign. They want to make links with building workers whose work is threatened by stops on nursery building.

Hackney Under 5s

Coordinate campaigns for all sorts of under-5 provision in the area, working on one-off efforts to increase facilities, publicising the need, fact-finding, lobbying, going to the Council, etc. They have a wide range of people involved - teachers, nursery nurses, mums, play leaders, and have built up excellent contacts. They liaise with education, Social Services and health departments now on under-5 issues.

Some of the ideas they have tried:



- surveying 2 estates to find the need for under-5 provision
- establishing a child-minders' training scheme
- holding a 'Mother's Day' march
- holding a conference
- supporting the nursery nurses in their wages strike - leafleting, demonstrating, lobbying.

Other specialist groups have grown out of this one, too:

- Handicapped children's group
- Toy libraries group
- Children in hospital group
- Nursery campaign.

The meeting point of voluntary projects organisers and campaigners for full-scale government

provision is becoming more important. With cuts, nursery provision is one of the first things to go. There's no doubt councils see voluntary projects as nursery provision ON THE CHEAP and support it while dragging their feet on proper provision.

Voluntary community projects don't provide anything for working parents - they couldn't begin to do so. They are as vulnerable to being cut as are official nurseries - grants are not increased to cope with inflation, costs of premises rise, etc., and volunteers take on more and more extra work - raising funds, for example.

Essential demands

The essential demand has to be for full state provision, and it will have to be fought for. Some campaigns reject any sort of voluntary effort as undermining the demand for full provision. Small projects often started before any organised campaign for full provision was set up are not unaware of the cheap let-out they provide for local authorities.

They do have scope now for linking with NALGO, Trades Councils, Cuts Campaigns, as Dericote Street are trying to do. Nursery campaigns can contact all the community under-5s projects in an area to get together to discuss the direction of a common action campaign and work out mutually agreed demands. Councils mustn't be allowed to play one group off against the other.

TENANTS & WORKERS UNITE

Leading trade unionists from the dockers and garment workers joined over 140 delegates from 40 trade union and 20 community organisations in East and South East London at a December day conference in calling for urgent action to stop the area's shattering loss of jobs. A third of all its jobs have left since 1961.

Speakers and delegates backed a 40-page conference document prepared by the Joint Dockland Action Group Resource Team. This outlines the reasons for the local economic decline and proposes a range of policies at national and local government level to rebuild declining inner city areas.

Key demands are for direct government investment (e.g. through the National Enterprise Board) and changes in regional policy to help these areas.

Local councils are urged to take a key role in providing jobs - for example by buying land and developing industrial estates and by expanding their direct labour forces. Vital however to these policy changes is the involvement of local trade unionists in council's decision-making.

Jobs Now - The Way Forward - a report on local employment policy, available from Joint Dockland Action Group, 58-60 Watney St, London E1 (01-790 8342). Price 30p.

URBAN AID CIRCULAR

After six months delay, the Government published its latest Urban Aid Circular on November 26th. This Circular invites applications for projects from both councils and community groups. The Home Office, which is in charge of Urban Aid, has set the deadline for final applications at February 18th. This has left groups with precious little time to apply for these grants. Councils have set deadlines in early January for community groups to apply to them. Protests have been made about these unrealistic deadlines. Groups should not accept these deadlines without challenging them.

The Circular starts by reminding councils of the government directives to keep a tight control on expenditure. As councils meet 25% of any grant they are unlikely to put forward many applications.

The total amount the Government is making available this time is not stated, only that it is likely to be less than last time, which was itself a third less than the time before (see CA 20).

There's still no word about the future of Urban Aid. The Home Office isn't saying. There are strong rumours that no new projects will be funded after this year.

HANG ON TO YOUR WALLET



Councils are going into big business!

They're going into the building business in a big way. The Government plan an Act of Parliament to give power to your local council to increase its "direct labour" operations so that it can operate like a private construction firm.

Whether you like it or not, rates will increase to finance the losses. And losses there will certainly be. Even with their present power, councils have made an astonishing mess of direct labour construction.

In Manchester, the District Auditor was so shocked by the wastefulness of "direct labour" schemes that he reported in August 1976: "the extent to which the Council has not received value for money because of bonus abuses and over-generous bonus targeting is not less than £340,000 for each year."

Incredibly, the Government plans to give councils exciting *new* opportunities for losing *your* shirt. They will be allowed to build anything for anyone: houses, factories, roads, even complex civil engineering projects like bridges and reservoirs.

Who will pay for the vast bureaucracy needed to run this creeping nationalisation? ... **YOU WILL.**

What can you do to stop it? Join the campaign against this stupidity. Join us **TODAY.** Send off the coupon for your Hang On To Your Wallets Protest Kit **NOW.**

Cut waste, cut rates, cut direct labour!

*I'm against this direct labour nonsense.
Send me your protest kit by return.*

FEDERATION OF CIVIL
ENGINEERING CONTRACTORS
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
BUILDING TRADES EMPLOYERS

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____

THE PROFIT MOTIVE

NEWSPAPER ADVERTS - like the one above - attacking council direct labour departments, have cost the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors £26,000.

As part of their latest advertising drive, the Federation put adverts in 12 national papers and 2 Sunday papers on the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th December. "We got in before the Christmas period", said the Federation's Press office.

"Direct labour is frankly a very unsexy topic," they said. "But we're trying to score on the cost of direct labour to ratepayers." The FCEC has placed

the adverts before the government announces legislation to strengthen direct labour departments. The Federation foresees no problem in obtaining more money from their members for more adverts if necessary - not surprising, since the 650 members of the FCEC include the biggest national construction companies, like Wimpeys, Taylor Woodrow and McAlpines.

Distortion

They claim that over 5,000 people have sent in for their "protest kits" (stickers, a poster and a propaganda leaflet). A lot of ratepayers' as-

THE FACTS ABOUT MANCHESTER'S DIRECT LABOUR

● New construction: Manchester's Direct Works have produced 1.33 dwellings per worker/year over the past 5 years, a productivity record a third higher than the private industry which produces 1 dwelling per worker/year.

● Out of the 5000 workers, over 10% (650) were apprentices (this has been increased to take in unemployed school leavers). This number is greater than the combined total of all private builders in Greater Manchester.

● Maintenance of buildings: Private contractors cost 40% more than Direct Works.

● Between 4 and 5% of its workforce are registered disabled (leading to higher costs). In the building industry generally, less than 1% are disabled.

● Paid £1.3m more on benefits to its 5,000 workers (e.g. Superannuation, Sick Pay, Long Service bonus) than any similar size of building contractor.

● Accident rates in the Direct Works Dept are half the rate in the building industry as a whole.;

sociations have written in for the kits.

They intend to write to all MPs and organise Parliamentary meetings.

The FCEC's attacks on the so-called "inefficiency" of direct labour departments and their appeal to ratepayers hardly conceals their real intention - to protect the profits of private builders at any price. So they are prepared to distort in any way the real achievements of direct labour departments in new building and improvement works.

£8,500,000,000 CUTS IN LESS THAN 2 YEARS -AND MORE TO COME

Latest IMF cuts

Last December the Labour Government cut public spending for the third time in 1976. The mini-budget was part of the conditions for a \$3,900 loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This loan is being paid in installments and if the financiers don't get the 'results' they want from these cuts, then further cuts will be demanded as a condition on the remaining installments of the loan.

Late last year the IMF team spent several weeks inspecting the Treasury 'books'. The Cabinet met 9 times to discuss the cuts, and at the same time the Tories, the City and the media pushed out propaganda demanding cuts of up to £5 billion.

In the end this round of cuts totalled £2,500 million. £1,000 million was cut from public spending in 1977/78 and the remainder cut from the following year's spending.

All this still isn't enough for some. By the time Healey had finished his speech in the Commons, the pound had fallen a further 2 cents against the U.S. dollar. Many stockbrokers "expressed disappointment". Sir Geoffrey Howe, Tory Shadow Chancellor summed it all up by saying "This budget is being introduced under the instructions of the IMF, and it is an IMF budget".

This latest round of cuts included:-

TOTAL CUT 1977/79

HOUSING. Municipalisation cut £50m £300m
land for council houses cut £50m, New
Town housebuilding cut £22m, Housing
Associations cut £60m.

EDUCATION. £31m cut from new building programme. £81m

FOOD SUBSIDIES. Butter and cheese to cost 4p per lb. more by eliminating or reducing subsidies. £217m

HEALTH. Over £22m cut from health and social service building programmes. £40m

LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES £100m



NATIONALISED INDUSTRIES. 10% increase £240m
in price of gas from April 1977.

TRANSPORT. Includes 6 month stand- £125m
still on all new road schemes, rail
subsidies cut £15m.

COMMUNITY LAND ACT. The amount of £70m
development land bought by local
authorities next year will be halved
to less than 2,000 acres.

Asset stripping

The Labour Government is also going to sell off over £500m worth of shares in BP to reduce its shareholding by 20% to 51%, i.e. they are selling off the most profitable asset the state possesses - and at a time when BP oil production from the North Sea and Alaska makes these assets even more valuable and government control all the more important.

Unemployment to reach 2m

By the end of 1977 it is widely expected that unemployment will reach 2 million, of which over 300,000 will be building workers, a rise of 80,000 over the present level. Even Jack Jones has now had to admit that the 'social contract' has been "bruised".

RATE SUPPORT GRANT '77-78 SLASHED

Less support for councils

The Government is cutting £656 million from its Rate Support Grant (RSG) to local councils next year, 1977-78. This was announced on November 22nd, and is a further massive cut aimed at reducing council spending by 1.6% in real terms over this year.

	Percentage of council spending to be met by RSG cut 1977-78	New RSG total	Size of the cut
England & Wales	from 65.5% to 61.0%	£7,147m*	£600m
Scotland	from 72.5% to 68.5%	£1,035m	£56m

(*including a £255m transport grant, and £731m in other specific grants.)

Besides cutting the size of its rate support grant, the Government has also fixed the amount it will make available to cover inflation to £570m, an inflation rate of only 10%. As for this year, the fact that inflation is expected to be nearer to 15% is to be ignored.

Council budgets are already controlled by "cash ceilings" imposed on this year's spending.

Rate increases of 15% are forecast for cities and up to 30% in the counties. Commercial ratepayers will probably face increases of only 11-12%.

How the axe will fall

The Government published a Circular on December 6th suggesting "possible economies" to reduce spending by 1.6%. These new savings include:-

- council rents up again - by an average of 60p per week from April.
- fares up - with cuts in transport subsidies and in services.
- concessionary fares frozen - no extra concess-

ionary fares for pensioners and no new fares schemes to be started.

- standstill on council housing management and maintenance - so "less essential" work will either be put off for a year, or be met out of more rent rises.
- a standstill on social services for the chronically sick and the elderly. More restrictions on residential care schemes.
- education spending to be cut by 1½% or £39m - mainly through cuts in capital spending on buildings and equipment.
- road spending to be cut.

These "economies" leave out:-

1. Police manpower.
2. Fire services.
3. Funding of magistrates courts.
4. School leavers careers services.

More public sector jobs lost

In announcing the level of RSG in November, Peter Shore estimated the cutback would result in a reduction of 20,000 - 25,000 jobs, mainly through "natural wastage". Council representatives and Trade Unions are more pessimistic about the effect on jobs, fearing larger redundancies in the public sector.

***** "CUTS THAT PUZZLE - THE CASE AGAINST THE CUTS"

Published by the Civil and Public Services Association. A Union booklet that explodes the myths in the press about public spending being "too high", about public sector workers being "non-productive". Looks at the alternatives. Spells out the real effects of the cuts on our public services. CPSA, 215 Balham High Road, London SW17. 01-672 1299

CUTS IN HEALTH SERVICES

Health services in London and Liverpool are the first to feel the full impact of this year's succession of public spending cuts.

Several hospitals and many wards are threatened with almost immediate closure.

The suddenness of these closures has taken many local people by surprise, but campaigns linking hospital workers and community groups are already under way.

There are two main reasons for the sudden attack on services.

Cash Limits

● First is the system of "cash limits" on Government grants to local authorities and health authorities introduced this year (see CA 22, p.11). The aim of cash limits is to tightly curb any increased demand for funds through the year. The limits assumed that annual inflation would fall to 10% and less. In fact, it has only come down to 15% - with little immediate prospect of a further fall. Despite this, the Government has refused to increase the cash limit for the health service - so any so-called "overspending" this year will be deducted from

next year's budget.

What makes this worse for the health service is the junior doctors' pay award. The cash limits were fixed before this award, which was much more expensive than predicted. Consequently, it can only be paid by reducing services dramatically elsewhere. London is especially hard hit as it has more junior doctors than other regions.

'Rawp' deal

● The second reason for the sudden crisis is the new method of distributing health resources across the country. In May 1975 the Government set up the Resource Allocation Working Party (RAWP) to secure "a pattern of distribution responsive, objectively, equitably and efficiently to relative need." In August 1975 their Interim Report recommended an immediate start to redistributing resources from the "well-off" to the more deprived regions. Targets were established based on a population formula. In September 1976 the final report was published which suggested a more sophisticated formula for allocating funds - though even this, on their own admission, was not a fully adequate measure of need.

Meanwhile, in April 1976 the Health Minister at that time (Barbara Castle) had accepted RAWP's Interim report and decided to implement its first stage in this financial year (1976-77).

Mersey and London (the four Thames Regional Health Authorities) were therefore deprived of the usual 2% annual growth allocation. The money saved was then distributed among the 'deprived' regions on the basis of RAWP's formula - Wessex, Trent and East Anglia received the largest amount, an extra allocation of 4%.

Sudden crisis

These two factors created a near-critical situation - especially in parts of London. Throughout the year there has been heavy overspending in the London area. In the first six months (up to October) City and East London Area Health Authority was 2% overspent - nearly £ $\frac{3}{4}$ million. The poorer Districts with teaching hospitals were worst off. Hackney (with St. Bartholomew's and St. Mark's) was nearly 4% overspent, and expected by the year's end to be overspent by £1.1 million.

Wards shut

In December drastic and immediate cuts were suggested by Hackney's District Management Team. Eleven wards were to be shut in five hospitals. Staffing was to be reduced by 400 in just two months, December and January. Spending on drugs, radiology and pathology was to be cut severely.

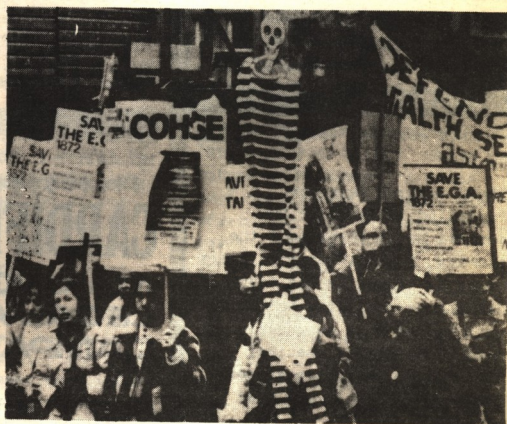
The Area Team pointed out this would only reduce the year's overspending to £600,000 (from £1.1m) - and called for even more cuts.

There was strong protest from community groups and trade unions. St. Mark's Hospital organised an action committee, including doctors and trade unions. Hackney Council threatened resignation from the Area Health Authority. The local Community Health Council organised protest at the cuts and at the total lack of consultation,

In the end, the cuts agreed by the Government were roughly the same as originally suggested by the District Management Team.

Bleak prospects

Despite this resistance, the prospects for 1977 onwards are even worse. Any overspending this year comes off next year's budget. But worse



than this are the long term prospects. As well as the reallocation of resources away from London under the RAWP scheme, Inner London will suffer under a mini reallocation scheme. This will start in 1977 and aims to take money away from inner London to build up health services in Essex and other outer areas - on the argument that London's spending per bed is much higher than in Essex.

Given the standstill on health spending, this can only be done by reducing spending in inner London. The plan is to cut 3,000 beds in the next 10 years from East London, Camden and Islington.

Yet the basis on which this is done is clearly inadequate. The RAWP system measures need by population - and takes no account of the special needs of the old inner city areas with their inadequate housing and poor working conditions.

Joint action

Hospitals are being cut at the moment simply to balance the books. This must be fought.

Resistance to these cuts must link community groups and trade unions - only joint campaigns can make an impression on present policies.

MORE NEWS...

NEW NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ATTACKS CLORIUS METERS

Tenants' Associations from all over the country met in Manchester on 6 November last year to launch a National Heat Metering Action Campaign for the complete withdrawal of the Clorius so-called 'heat meters' from their District Heated council estates. (See CA 23, p. 31)

These devices have been installed in about 23,000 council homes throughout the country. Each radiator in every house is linked to the District Heating system. Attached to each radiator is an unsealed tube containing a chemical fluid which in theory evaporates, according to the heat consumed.

Technical advisors consulted by the various tenants' groups are unanimous in their condemnation of these devices which have never been tested in this country and do not have British Standard Institute approval. Tenants can still face annual heating surcharges (over and above their weekly payments) of £300 and more.

Coordinated action planned

The groups involved in the campaign have resolved to take legal and more direct action on a coordinated basis and to contact other tenants' organisations not yet represented on the national campaign to offer information and assistance.

Tenants organisations represented at the Conference came from Nottingham; Crewe; Coalville, Leics; Rochdale;

Runcorn; Lymm and Manchester. Apologies were received from groups in Bristol and Washington, Co. Durham, who support the campaign but were unable to attend. The slogan being adopted by the National Heat Metering Action Campaigns is 'CON - CLORIUS OUT NOW'.

Contact: Manchester Area Resource Centre, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester 1. (061-236 1117)

CARDIFF MAKING USE OF LEGAL AID FOR CAMPAIGNS

Whilst many community organisations have learned to be suspicious of the law, a growing number of groups have used the "legal aid" scheme for short term advantages. Adamsdown Community and Advice Centre in Cardiff has found ways of using the Green Form part of the legal aid scheme to obtain substantial resources for helping local people in their campaigns. In the main these resources have been used to pay for "expert" advice. Although technical arguments cannot replace a campaign, they help to increase its effectiveness.

Green Form scheme

The Green Form scheme is one part of the legal aid scheme. Legal aid is used for representing people in court for criminal, divorce and other matters. The Green Form can be used to obtain free advice and assistance on any legal matter, except appearances in court.

So this includes advising on any statutory duty or power of a local authority - housing, education, highways repair, social services - as well as individual grievances and problems.

How it works

The scheme works by a solicitor firstly helping a client to complete a means test form. This is to make sure the client is eligible. If the client falls within certain income and capital limits, the solicitor can then go on to give, for free, up to £25 worth of advice and assistance.

But, most important for campaigns, the solicitor can spend part of the £25 on getting the advice of non-legal experts, including public health inspectors, planners, doctors, surveyors, etc - or, indeed, from other lawyers, so long as this extra advice bears on the legal advice being given. So, even if your group doesn't need a solicitor, he/she may be able to help you to get and pay for other kinds of advice and assistance.

More money available

Furthermore, £25 is an initial limit only. If the solicitor makes out a case to the local Legal Aid Committee, this limit can be extended. Adamsdown Community and Advice Centre has obtained £375 on one Green Form.

Note that organisations as such cannot use the scheme - each Green Form application has to be made by an individual. But any individual, or group of individuals, can get advice on an issue which affects them and which also affects the community group

to which they belong.
The only problem is that the means test restricts the number of people in a group who may be eligible for aid.

THE SCHEME IN USE

A number of residents formed a group to resist demolition of their area. Fifteen of them signed Green Forms and extensions to the financial limits were obtained to £125 per applicant, making £1,800 in all. This was used to pay for a report on the physical and social aspects of the area undertaken by a firm of improvement specialists. This report later became a draft declaration report for a Housing Action Area. The HAA was declared, the area was withdrawn from the clearance programme, and a local Housing Association was formed.

Although not done in this case, legal advice on the various Acts covering HAAs and advice on how to form a Housing Association could also have been financed under the Green Form scheme.

Forming an organisation

Four clients of the Centre wished to form an organisation in Wales to parallel the British Epilepsy Association. Each completed a Green Form and advice was given (costing £100) on how to draw up a constitution, etc.

Road repairs

In Adamsdown the roads and pavements are in a mess. The council has a statutory duty (S.44 of the Highways Act 1959) to repair and maintain the highways. Using four Green Forms, £1,000 was obtained for general legal advice, a report on the state of the roads by a qualified civil engineer, barristers' opinions, and a survey of the defects. (See CA no. 28, p.5.)

Use of the Green Form scheme is not without drawbacks and pitfalls. The means test rules limit it to people with low incomes; solicitors in

private practice will usually have little, if any, experience of using the scheme in this way, and may not be willing to make the effort.

However, the examples indicate the potential of the scheme for community groups.

Anyone thinking of using the scheme is encouraged to contact a local Law Centre, if one is available. The Adamsdown Centre will also advise on using the Green Form.

Contact Clive Grace, Adamsdown Community & Advice Centre, 103/4 Clifton St, Adamsdown, Cardiff. (0222-498117/8)

LEEDS: Hospital closures begin as Health Authority plan threatens to cut 20% of hospital places & 2000 jobs *** Housing Action Group scheme for gradual renewal in Woodhouse to be examined by Council *** Leeds Campaign Against the Cuts leaflets rush-hour bus queues detailing £50,000 cuts in local bus services (Leeds Other Press)

LIVERPOOL: Housewives use Community Transport bus service to boycott high-price estate supermarket (Liverpool Free Press)

SHEFFIELD: Successful patients' group campaign against closure of health clinic *** Woodhouse Village Action Committee demand that Public Inquiry on clearance plans for area be held in village, not in Sheffield Town Hall (Sheffield Free Press)

NEWCASTLE: survey shows that 15% of tenants in properties for which "fair" rents were registered are paying excessive rents. Result indicates that at least 1500 registered tenants in Newcastle may be paying more than they should.

TYNESIDE: Successful campaign against closure of Fleming Hospital (Tyneside Street Press) *** "The Cuts Show" in Benwell community centre uses film, photos, cartoons, reports etc. to show effect of cuts on local services *** Gateshead Director of Education says cuts could mean closure of local schools (Workers' Chronicle)

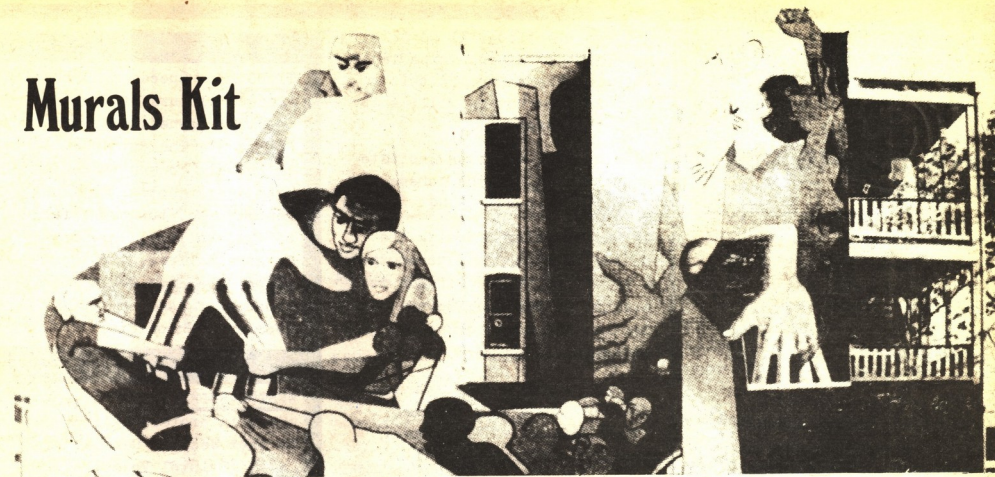
WESTON-SUPER-MARE: over 4000 march in protest against plans to shut Weston General Hospital (Bristol Voice)

WANDSWORTH: Council report "Prosperity or Slump: The Future of Wandsworth's Economy" blames loss of local manufacturing jobs on central gov't policies, multi-national companies & redevelopment - calls for more direct employment by Council and new forms of industrial ownership & control, including Council funds for workers' co-ops *** Morgan Crucible submits new plans for offices and luxury flats on riverside site. Battersea Redevelopment Action Group demands Council buy site for industrial development and municipal housing under Community Land Act powers (Lower Down)

LONDON: National Consumer Council calls for legislation to encourage setting-up of credit unions to give people without bank accounts access to credit at moderate rates of interest

ISLINGTON: Anti-motorway group block rush-hour traffic to demand better public transport, an end to motorway madness (Islington Gutter Press)

Murals Kit



The Directory of Social Change have published a Mural Kit (£1.00) which should be useful for any group thinking about doing a community mural. The Kit distinguishes between (1) murals painted by individual artists, (2) murals created by community groups themselves, and (3) murals which are the creation of artists and community groups working together.

Local themes

Murals which are developed in this third way can express problems or themes which are important to a neighbourhood (urban decay, industrial history, vandalism), while benefitting from the technical flair which the artist can bring to the project.

The Kit stresses that good murals are usually the result of long and careful organising, and gives practical advice on the whole process of creating a mural - e.g.

- ▶selecting a suitable wall
- ▶choosing the theme and preparing the first sketch
- ▶obtaining materials

- ▶sponsorship
- ▶transferring the sketch to the wall
- ▶arranging the 'opening' ceremony.

There is also background information on the urban mural movement in the USA, including statements from several mural artists, and names and addresses of useful contacts in Britain.

The Directory also publish a series of slide packs with accompanying notes. An Introduction to Mural Painting Part 1 covers vandalism, graffiti, the aims of the mural movement and community mural painting projects, and Part 2 illustrates children's murals, building site fences, abstract murals, 'psychedelic murals,' ethnic murals and walls of pride, and decorations on houses, garage doors and private property. At £4.50 each, these packs are very expensive but they could be useful to show at Public Meetings in areas where wall murals have never been tried and where residents and tenants may have difficulty in visualising them or may be hostile to the idea at first.

All available from the Directory of Social Change
14 Saltram Crescent, London W 9.

HELP TO SELL COMMUNITY ACTION

Please fill in the form below. We will send you some C/A posters and information sheets describing C/A aims together with a list of contents of back issues. Each issue of C/A will be sent on a sale or return basis. We must however have payment and unsold copies returned on a regular basis.

☐ Please send me ☐

(STARTING WITH ISSUE NO.....)

- ___ 6 copies of C/A
- ___ 9 copies of C/A
- ___ 12 copies of C/A
- ___ specify

Name _____
Address _____

Community Action, P.O. Box 665, London SW1X 8DZ

Dear Community Action,

I am a local corporation tenant on the Speke estate, and I would be very grateful for any advice you or your readers could give me on the following matter.

I live in the top floor flat of a block of 3 storeys high. The windows are designed in such a way that tenants cannot clean the outside of these windows without grave risk of personal injury.

I have been fighting this matter on behalf of the other tenants in a similar position to myself for three years now. During this time I have been visited by three housing managers; Eddie Loyden (the local Labour M.P.); reporters from Liverpool Weekly News and Liverpool Echo; Labour Councillors who promised to refer the matter to my local ombudsman, but never did; Esther Rantzen of the B.B.C. All these people agreed that there was a

genuine problem with the design of the windows - but so far I have failed to make the Council do anything about a remedy. I have even taken legal advice (under Legal Aid) from a barrister. I enclose a copy of his report.

What can I do next? I may add I am 79 years of age, and determined to keep on fighting. Is

Window wipe out

Window-cleaning services for Liverpool's walk-up flats could cost up to £240,000 a year, the City Council's Estate Management Sub-Committee heard yesterday. If tenants were to pay for a monthly service, they would face weekly rent rises of between 25p and 46p according to a report on areas where window-cleaning is a difficulty. The sub-committee agreed to note the report but take no action on it.

there anything in the Housing Finance Act (or any other legislation) that says the Council should see that a tenant can clean windows without risk of injury, or, if the tenant cannot because of the design, provide a window cleaner with proper ladders and insurance free of charge? Have any readers of C.A. had a similar fight with a Council and won?

Once again the tenants are made to suffer through the failings of some faceless person(s) to do a proper job - in this case design a window that could be cleaned inside and outside.

I would be grateful for any publicity you could give this matter in your paper.

Yours sincerely,

William Gallagher, 43b Central Way, Speke, Liverpool 24

Since we have not previously covered this problem in Community Action, we thought it might be a good idea to use this letter as a way of writing a small article about a campaign that a group of pensioners started in West London for a subsidised window cleaning service. This had come about because one local pensioner had had a serious accident when she fell trying to clean her windows, and many pensioners were just too scared even to attempt cleaning theirs.

"I am a pensioner of 73, and I find increasing difficulty cleaning my windows. The centre one opens up and down, and the side ones don't open at all. Therefore I have to lean out of the open centre window to wash the outside of the side ones. I am on the 12th floor, and the whole experience is terrifying. Something must be done to let us have them cleaned cheaply, because I can't afford to have them done professionally, and there must be hundreds like me."

For a long time Mrs Dedman accepted that this was the situation, until one day she got chatting to her neighbour, who happened to be the treasurer of a local pensioners' action group, the Kensington Pensioners Association (KPAA). They in conjunction with two other local pensioners' groups had already started a campaign for subsidised window cleaning within the Borough.

In the summer, members of all three groups gathered over 3,000 signatures in support of their campaign. This got a lot of local press coverage: 'Pensioners demand daylight' was one headline. They decided that the best way to get the service they wanted was to draw up a working plan of how such a scheme could work, and to ask the local council to give them enough money to finance a pilot scheme before they finally made up their minds. 'We wanted to pay somebody 25p per window. We would pay 15p and the council would pay the remaining 10p. This way our windows would be cleaned for a

reasonable price, and the person doing it would get a decent wage.'

On November 5th, a large group of the pensioners marched down to the Town Hall to present the scheme and the petition to a council meeting. Although the pilot scheme would have only cost £100, the council decided they would have to say no, despite the obvious need for such a scheme....because of the seriousness of the present crisis! At the same meeting, with their belts well pulled in, and their socks over their knees, they decided that £2,000 was not too much to spend on the local Mayor's banquet....'it helps to bring the community together'.

The campaign might have been halted for the time being, but the pensioners say that they are determined to carry on with it. 'In the future we'll just have to fight harder,' said the chairperson of the KPAA, Emmie Whitley. 'We'll be in a better position because we have learnt from our mistakes.'

REPORTS & THINGS REPORTS & THINGS REI

WHITE LION STREET FREE SCHOOL BULLETIN NO.4

25p or more if you can afford it. From 57 White Lion St. London N1.

This bulletin covers some aspects of the school's development from summer 1975 to autumn 1976. It has been written by all the full-time workers, with additions from parents, children and part-time workers. Includes comments by the workers on their work, activities of the kids and the Free School's finances.

BENWELL NEWS + VIEWS: SPECIAL ISSUES ON (1)

COUNCIL HOUSING; and (2) HOUSING FINANCE.

10p each plus s.a.e. from Benwell CDP, 85 Adelaide Terrace, Newcastle upon Tyne 4.

Both these pamphlets use the key arguments in the CDP national reports - 'Whatever Happened to Council Housing?' and 'Profits Against Houses' backed up with detailed local information. Excellent examples of getting important political issues across to a much wider audience.

SQUATTING: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT. 10p+7p(p&p) from Squatters Action Council Pamphlets, 13 Severus Rd London SW11.

Exposes the real facts behind the anti-squatting stories which have appeared in the press in recent months. Also describes the Squatting Charter and the Criminal Trespass proposals.

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS? Council Rent Arrears: Policy and Practice in Bradford: by Bradford Housing Action Group, c/o Flat 10, 1 Oak Villas, Bradford 8. Price 55p inc. post.

The report contains 56 short case histories which show that the treatment of tenants in arrears in Bradford is so far from that laid down in the Council's policy, itself far from perfect, as to render the policy little more than a piece of paper. The report examines in detail the way the council's policy and procedures fail.

LAND FOR THE PEOPLE

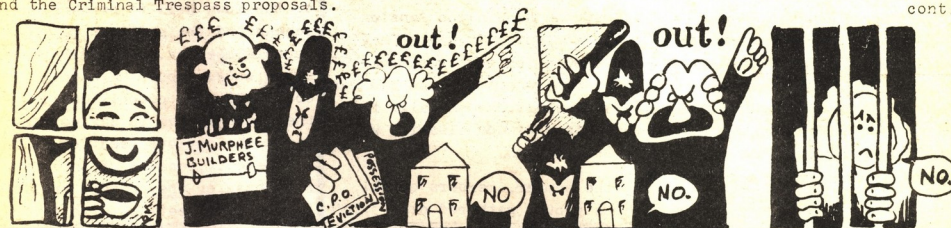
compiled by Herbert Girardet

Price £1.20, published by Crescent Books.

This is a collection of essays about different aspects of land ownership and land use. The book concentrates on rural and agricultural land, rather than what has happened or should happen to land in towns and cities. Although parts of the book may not be of direct interest to most community groups, there are useful chapters on the basic principles of land nationalisation and a brief history of the mediaeval enclosures of land and the Diggers movement, which took over common land for the people.

PAYMENTS FOR DEBT Greater Western Belfast Community Association, 234, Grosvenor Road, Belfast 12. (30p ?) In 1971 the government brought in the 'Payments for Debt' order to pull in all the money owed by the political rate and rent strikers in Northern Ireland.

cont.P.39



campaign against a criminal trespass law

6 Bowden St, London SE11

01-289 3877

CACTL—LOCAL GROUPS

BRIGHTON: c/o Open Cafe, 7 Victoria Road, Brighton, Sussex.
BRISTOL: c/o 6 Westfield Park, Bristol 6.
CANTERBURY: c/o 7 York Road, Canterbury, Kent.
COLCHESTER: c/o 5 Gladstone Road, Colchester, Essex.
COVENTRY: c/o 1 Bedford Street, Butts, Coventry.
LIVERPOOL: c/o 39/41 Manesty's Lane, Liverpool 1.
MANCHESTER: c/o SCA, Students Union, Manchester Poly, Cavendish Street, Manchester 15.

NOTTINGHAM: c/o 15 Scotholme Avenue, Nottingham.
OXFORD: c/o 38 Hurst Street, Oxford.
SHEFFIELD: c/o 1 Portsea Road, Sheffield 6.
SWANSEA: c/o 79 Brokesby Road, Bon-y-maen, Swansea.
Cardigan: Glaneirw Community, Blaenporth, Dyfed, Wales.
Cardiff: Maggie Christie, c/o 108 Bookshop, 108 Salisbury Road, Cardiff.

Local London Groups:

S. London, Union Place, 122-4 Vassall Road, SW 9.
N. London, 161 Hornsey Road, N 7.
E. London, Dame Colet House, Ben Jonson Road, E 14.
S.E. London, Deptford HAC, 171 Deptford High Street, SE 8.
W. London, c/o 1 Elgin Avenue, W 9.

(cont)

The report shows that arrears are being taken from all benefits, and that the amounts being raked in by the Benefit Allocation Branch of the DHSS are often well over the legal maximum. Calls for the repeal of the order.

Case studies, official letters, earnings data, etc.

HAVELOCK: THE CASE FOR PRIORITY TREATMENT D.Skinner, 5, Fitzwilliam Row, Sheffield 3. 30p approx.

A report backing up an application by the Broomhall Community Group for a Housing Action Area. Examines the 'participation' process started by Sheffield council and ending up with an HAA campaign. Many useful statistics for other groups - but thin on campaign tactics.

WHOSE PRIORITIES ? Radical Statistics Group, c/o BSSRS, 9, Poland St, London W1. 60p.

A close - and readable - examination of the governments so-called 'consultation document' on Priorities for Health and Social Services. Figures and forecasts in the document are shown to be inaccurate. The rate of inflation is underestimated; some growth targets will take 30 years to reach.

Useful booklet for Cuts Campaigns.

HOUSING IMPROVEMENT HANDBOOK

The group who put this Handbook together are thinking about a revised edition to keep up with both changing improvement conditions and with comments received from the Handbook's users. They welcome any further suggestions and ideas about the Handbook.

Those who would like a copy of the Handbook: A Self-Help Approach for Resident's Groups, price £1.50 plus 50p postage, write to Jo Bloor, 9 Queenston Road, Manchester 20.

EMPTY HOMES CAMPAIGN SPREADS

WESTMINSTER EMPTY PROPERTY ACTION COMMITTEE

(see C/A 26)

Posters still for sale. Inflation hits community groups as well, so we've had to raise the price of our posters - still exceptionally good value for money. Current prices are:

- 10 for 70p plus 10p postage
- 25 for £1.75p plus 25p postage
- 50 for £3.50p post free.

Cheques to: Westminster Empty Property Action Committee, 3 Croxley Road, London W.9.

ALSO We are planning to organise a one-day conference on a Saturday in late January/early Feb. This will be for groups to share their successes and frustrations and to hammer out tactics for achieving action from councils within the present legal and financial framework. Contact us for more details.

Workers wanted

SECOND WORKER required for the Wandsworth Housing Rights Centre (voluntary agency). Main work will be to help people with their housing problems and to administer small office. Experience in housing rights is essential. For job description & application form, please ring 01-870 3259, or write WHRC c/o 8 Ridgmount Rd., London SW18. Closing date for completed applications: 21.1.77.

DAYTIME VOLUNTEERS wanted for information centre in multi-purpose neighbourhood based agency. Mainly citizens/welfare rights work with groups/individuals. No previous experience/knowledge necessary. Contact BIAS at Blackfriars Settlement, 44 Nelson Square, London SE 1. 01-928 9521.

LIE OF THE LAND

COMMUNITY LAND ACT: LAND NATIONALISATION BETRAYED.

This pamphlet analyses why the Community Land Act - legislation sold to the community as the answer to the disaster of property speculation - will in fact do nothing to help working class communities gain the land they need for council housing, schools and other community facilities. The pamphlet includes a simple guide to the Act, an explanation of why land nationalisation is necessary, reports from community groups around the country who are bitterly disappointed with the Act, and shows how the property world is dictating the ways in which the Act will operate.

Published by the Land Campaign Working Party, c/o 31, Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

Price 35p. 5 for £1.45, 10 for £2.75 (inc. postage).

FIGHT THE CUTS FILM

The "Fight the Cuts" film is now available in 4 different versions as follows:

- No. 1 On health, hospitals and social workers
Length: 20 minutes
- No. 2 On housing, education and nurseries - cuts and cuts campaigns
Length: 25 minutes
- No. 3 No. 1 and No. 2 together
Length: 45 minutes
- No. 4 No. 3 plus 10 minutes on who profits from the cuts
Length: 55 minutes

Copies of the film are available from:
The Other Cinema
12-13 Little Newport Street
London WC 2
Tel: 01-734 8508

Charges for any version (to cover carriage, etc.)
£8 to educational institutions
£4 to anybody else.